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MADAME DELPHINE,

ETC.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Price One Shilling.

OLD CREOLE DAYS.

Contents.

'SIEUR GEORGE.
'TITE POULETTE.
BELLES DEMOISELLES PLANTATION.
JEAN-AH POQUELIN.
MADAME DÉLICIEUSE.
CAFÉ DES EXILÉS.
"POSSON JONE'."

"The six or seven stories in 'Old Creole Days' are all so good that there is as much pleasure in praising as in reading them. Notwithstanding their brevity they are admirably complete as romances, and contain all the pathetic grace which so eminently characterises the stories of American authors, who certainly possess the faculty of conveying the deepest and most subtle meaning in the fewest words."—*Westminster Review.*

EDINBURGH: DAVID DOUGLAS.

MADAME DELPHINE

CARANCRO

AND

GRANDE POINTE

BY

GEORGE W. CABLE

EDINBURGH
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MADAME DELPHINE.

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD HOUSE.

A FEW steps from the St. Charles Hotel, in New Orleans, brings you to and across Canal Street, the central avenue of the city, and to that corner where the flower-women sit at the inner and outer edges of the arcaded sidewalk, and make the air sweet with their fragrant merchandise. The crowd —and if it is near the time of the carnival it will be great—will follow Canal Street.

But you turn, instead, into the quiet, narrow way which a lover of Creole antiquity, in fondness for a romantic past, is still prone to call the Rue Royale. You will pass a few restaurants, a few auction rooms, a few furniture warehouses, and will hardly realise that you have left behind you the activity and clatter of a city of merchants before you find yourself in a region of architectural decrepitude, where an ancient and foreign-seeming domestic life, in second

stories, overhangs the ruins of a former commercial prosperity, and upon everything has settled down a long Sabbath of decay. The vehicles in the street are few in number, and are merely passing through; the stores are shrunken into shops; you see here and there, like a patch of bright mould, the stall of that significant fungus, the Chinaman. Many great doors are shut and clamped and grown grey with cobweb; many street windows are nailed up; half the balconies are begrimed and rust-eaten, and many of the humid arches and alleys which characterise the older Franco-Spanish piles of stuccoed brick betray a squalor almost Oriental.

Yet beauty lingers here. To say nothing of the picturesque, sometimes you get sight of comfort, sometimes of opulence, through the unlatched wicket in some *porte-cochère*—red-painted brick pavement, foliage of dark palm or pale banana, marble or granite masonry and blooming parterres; or through a chink between some pair of heavy batten window-shutters, opened with an almost reptile wariness, your eye gets a glimpse of lace and brocade upholstery, silver and bronze, and much similar rich antiquity.

The faces of the inmates are in keeping—

a sad proportion of the passengers in the street are dingy and shabby ; but just when these are putting you off your guard, there will pass you a woman—more likely two or three—of patrician beauty.

Now, if you will go far enough down this old street, you will see, as you approach its intersection with ——. Names in that region elude one like ghosts.

However, as you begin to find the way a trifle more open, you will not fail to notice on the right-hand side, about mid-way of the square, a small, low, brick house of a story and a half, set out upon the sidewalk, as weather-beaten and mute as an aged beggar fallen asleep. Its corrugated roof of dull red tiles, sloping down toward you with an inward curve, is overgrown with weeds, and in the fall of the year is gay with yellow plumes of the golden-rod. You can almost touch with your cane the low edge of the broad, overhanging eaves. The batten shutters at door and window, with hinges like those of a postern, are shut with a grip that makes one's knuckles and nails feel lacerated. Save in the brickwork itself there is not a cranny. You would say the house has the lock-jaw. There are two doors, and to each

a single chipped and battered marble step. Continuing on down the sidewalk, on a line with the house, is a garden masked from view by a high, close board-fence. You may see the tops of its fruit-trees—pomegranate, peach, banana, fig, pear, and particularly one large orange, close by the fence, that must be very old.

The residents over the narrow way, who live in a three-story house, originally of much pretension, but from whose front door hard times have removed almost all vestiges of paint, will tell you—

"Yass, de 'ouse is in'abit: 'tis live in."

And this is likely to be all the information you get—not that they would not tell, but they cannot grasp the idea that you wish to know—until, possibly, just as you are turning to depart, your informant, in a single word and with the most evident non-appreciation of its value, drops the simple key to the whole matter—

"Dey 's quadroons."

He may then be aroused to mention the better appearance of the place in former years, when the houses of this region generally stood further apart, and that garden comprised the whole square.

Here dwelt, sixty years ago and more, one Delphine Carraze ; or, as she was commonly designated by the few who knew her, Madame Delphine. That she owned her home, and that it had been given her by the then deceased companion of her days of beauty, were facts so generally admitted as to be, even as far back as that sixty years ago, no longer a subject of gossip. She was never pointed out by the denizens of the quarter as a character, nor her house as a "feature." It would have passed all Creole powers of guessing to divine what you could find worthy of inquiry concerning a retired quadroon woman ; and not the least puzzled of all would have been the timid and restive Madame Delphine herself.

CHAPTER II.

MADAME DELPHINE.

DURING the first quarter of the present century, the free quadroon caste of New Orleans was in its golden age. Earlier generations sprung, upon the one hand, from the merry gallants of a French colonial military service which had grown gross by affiliation with Spanish-American frontier life, and, upon the other hand, from comely Ethiopians culled out of the less negroidal types of African live goods, and bought at the ship's side with vestiges of quills and cowries and copper wire still in their head-dresses, — these earlier generations, with scars of battle or private rencontre still on their fathers, and of servitude on the manumitted mothers, afforded a mere hint of the splendour that was to result from a survival of the fairest through seventy-five years devoted to the elimination of the black pigment and the cultivation of hyperian excellence

and nymphean grace and beauty. Nor, if we turn to the present, is the evidence much stronger which is offered by the *gens de couleur* whom you may see in the quadroon quarter this afternoon, with "Ichabod" legible on their murky foreheads through a vain smearing of toilet powder, dragging their chairs down to the narrow gateway of their close-fenced gardens, and staring shrinkingly at you as you pass, like a nest of yellow kittens.

But as the present century was in its second and third decades, the *quadroones* (for we must contrive a feminine spelling to define the strict limits of the caste as then established) came forth in splendour. Old travellers spare no terms to tell their praises, their faultlessness of feature, their perfection of form, their varied styles of beauty,—for there were even pure Caucasian blondes among them, their fascinating manners, their sparkling vivacity, their chaste and pretty wit, their grace in the dance, their modest propriety, their taste and elegance in dress. In the gentlest and most poetic sense they were indeed the sirens of this land, where it seemed "always afternoon"—a momentary triumph of

an Arcadian over a Christian civilisation, so beautiful and so seductive that it became the subject of special chapters by writers of the day more original than correct as social philosophers.

The balls that were got up for them by the male *sang-pur* were to that day what the carnival is to the present. Society balls given the same nights proved failures through the coincidence. The magnates of government, — municipal, state, federal, — those of the army, of the learned professions and of the clubs, — in short, the white male aristocracy in everything save the ecclesiastical desk, — were there. Tickets were high-priced to ensure the exclusion of the vulgar. No distinguished stranger was allowed to miss them. They were beautiful! They were clad in silken extenuations from the throat to the feet, and wore, withal, a pathos in their charm that gave them a family likeness to innocence.

Madame Delphine, were you not a stranger, could have told you all about it; though hardly, I suppose, without tears.

But at the time of which we would speak (1821-22) her day of splendour was set, and her husband — let us call him so for her sake

—was long dead. He was an American, and, if we take her word for it, a man of noble heart and extremely handsome; but this is knowledge which we can do without.

Even in those days the house was always shut, and Madame Delphine's chief occupation and end in life seemed to be to keep well locked up indoors. She was an excellent person, the neighbours said,—a very worthy person; and they were, may be, nearer correct than they knew. They rarely saw her save when she went to or returned from church; a small, rather tired-looking, dark quadroone of very good features and a gentle thoughtfulness of expression which it would take long to describe: call it a widow's look.

In speaking of Madame Delphine's house, mention should have been made of a gate in the fence on the Royal Street sidewalk. It is gone now, and was out of use then, being fastened once for all by an iron staple clasping the cross-bar and driven into the post.

Which leads us to speak of another person.

CHAPTER III.

CAPITAINE LEMAITRE.

CAPITAINE LEMAITRE was one of those men that might be any age,—thirty, forty, forty-five; there was no telling from his face what was years and what was only weather. His countenance was of a grave and quiet, but also luminous, sort, which was instantly admired and ever afterward remembered, as was also the fineness of his hair and the blueness of his eyes. Those pronounced him youngest who scrutinised his face the closest. But waiving the discussion of age, he was odd, though not with the oddness that he who reared him had striven to produce.

He had not been brought up by mother or father. He had lost both in infancy, and had fallen to the care of a rugged old military grandpapa of the colonial school, whose unceasing endeavour had been to make "his boy" as savage and ferocious a holder of

unimpeachable social rank as it became a pure-blooded French Creole to be who could trace his pedigree back to the god Mars.

"Remember, my boy," was the adjuration received by him as regularly as his waking cup of black coffee, "that none of your family line ever kept the laws of any government or creed." And if it was well that he should bear this in mind, it was well to reiterate it persistently, for, from the nurse's arms, the boy wore a look, not of docility so much as of gentle *judicial* benevolence. The domestics of the old man's house used to shed tears of laughter to see that look on the face of a babe. His rude guardian addressed himself to the modification of this facial expression; it had not enough of majesty in it, for instance, or of large daredevilry; but with care these could be made to come.

And, true enough, at twenty-one (in Ursin Lemaitre), the labours of his grandfather were an apparent success. He was not rugged, nor was he loud-spoken, as his venerable trainer would have liked to present him to society; but he was as serenely terrible as a well-aimed rifle, and the old man looked upon his results with pride.

He had cultivated him up to that pitch where he scorned to practise any vice, or any virtue, that did not include the principle of self-assertion. A few touches only were wanting here and there to achieve perfection, when suddenly the old man died. Yet it was his proud satisfaction, before he finally lay down, to see Ursin a favoured companion and the peer, both in courtesy and pride, of those polished gentlemen famous in history, the brothers Lafitte.

The two Lafittes were, at the time young Lemaitre reached his majority (say 1808 or 1812), only merchant blacksmiths, so to speak, a term intended to convey the idea of blacksmiths who never soiled their hands, who were men of capital, stood a little higher than the clergy, and moved in society among its autocrats. But they were full of possibilities, men of action, and men, too, of thought, with already a pronounced disbelief in the custom-house. In these days of big carnivals they would have been patented as the dukes of Little Manchac and Barataria.

Young Ursin Lemaitre (in full the name was Lemaitre-Vignevielle) had not only the hearty friendship of these good people, but

also a natural turn for accounts; and as his two friends were looking about them with an enterprising eye, it easily resulted that he presently connected himself with the blacksmithing profession. Not exactly at the forge in the Lafittes' famous smithy, among the African Samsons, who, with their shining black bodies bared to the waist, made the Rue St. Pierre ring with the stroke of their hammers; but as a—there was no occasion to mince the word in those days—smuggler.

Smuggler—patriot—where was the difference? Beyond the ken of a community to which the enforcement of the revenue laws had long been merely so much out of every man's pocket and dish into the all-devouring treasury of Spain. At this date they had come under a kinder yoke, and to a treasury that at least echoed when the customs were dropped into it; but the change was still new. What could a man be more than Capitaine Lemaitre was—the soul of honour, the pink of courtesy, with the courage of the lion, and the magnanimity of the elephant; frank—the very exchequer of truth? Nay, go higher still: his paper was good in Toulouse Street. To the gossips in the

gaming-clubs he was the culminating proof that smuggling was one of the sublimer virtues.

Years went by. Events transpired which have their place in history. Under a government which the community by and by saw was conducted in their interest, smuggling began to lose its respectability and to grow disreputable, hazardous, and debased. In certain onslaughts made upon them by officers of the law some of the smugglers became murderers. The business became unprofitable for a time until the enterprising Lafittes — thinkers — bethought them of a corrective,—"privateering."

Thereupon the United States Government set a price upon their heads. Later yet it became known that these outlawed pirates had been offered money and rank by Great Britain if they would join her standard, then hovering about the water-approaches to their native city, and that they had spurned the bribe; wherefore their heads were ruled out of the market, and meeting and treating with Andrew Jackson, they were received as lovers of their country, and as compatriots fought in the battle of New Orleans at the head of their fearless men,

and—here tradition takes up the tale—were never seen afterward.

Capitaine Lemaitre was not among the killed or wounded, but he was among the missing.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE FRIENDS.

THE roundest and happiest-looking priest in the city of New Orleans was a little man fondly known among his people as Père Jerome. He was a Creole, and a member of one of the city's leading families. His dwelling was a little frame cottage, standing on high pillars just inside a tall, close fence, and reached by a narrow outdoor stair from the green batten gate. It was well surrounded by crape myrtles, and communicated behind by a descending stair and a plank-walk with the rear entrance of the chapel over whose worshippers he daily spread his hands in benediction. The name of the street—ah! there is where light is wanting. Save the Cathedral and the Ursulines, there is very little of record concerning churches of that time, though they were springing up here and there. All there is certainty of is that Père Jerome's frame

chapel was some little new-born "down-town" thing, that may have survived the passage of years, or may have escaped "Paxton's directory" "so as by fire." His parlour was dingy and carpetless; one could smell distinctly there the vow of poverty. His bedchamber was bare and clean, and the bed in it narrow and hard, but between the two was a dining-room that would tempt a laugh to the lips of any one who looked in. The table was small, but stout, and all the furniture of the room substantial, made of fine wood, and carved just enough to give the notion of wrinkling pleasantry. His mother's and sister's doing, Père Jerome would explain; they would not permit this apartment—or department—to suffer. Therein, as well as in the parlour, there was odour, but of a more epicurean sort, that explained interestingly the Père Jerome's rotundity and rosy smile.

In this room, and about this miniature round-table, used sometimes to sit with Père Jerome two friends to whom he was deeply attached—one, Evariste Varrillat, a playmate from early childhood, now his brother-in-law; the other, Jean Thompson, a companion from youngest manhood, and

both, like the little priest himself, the regretful rememberers of a fourth comrade who was a comrade no more. Like Pere Jerome, they had come, through years, to the thick of life's conflicts,—the priest's brother-in-law a physician, the other an attorney, and brother-in-law to the lonely wanderer,—yet they loved to huddle round this small board, and be boys again in heart while men in mind. Neither one nor another was leader. In earlier days they had always yielded to him who no longer met with them a certain chieftainship, and they still thought of him and talked of him, and, in their conjectures, groped after him, as one of whom they still continued to expect greater things than of themselves.

They sat one day drawn thus close together, sipping and theorising, speculating upon the nature of things in an easy, bold, sophomoric way, the conversation for the most part being in French, the native tongue of the doctor and priest, and spoken with facility by Jean Thompson, the lawyer, who was half Américain ; but running sometimes into English, and sometimes into mild laughter. Mention had been made of the absentee.

Père Jerome advanced an idea something like this :—

"It is impossible for any finite mind to fix the degree of criminality of any human act or of any human life. The Infinite One alone can know how much of our sin is chargeable to us, and how much to our brothers or our fathers. We all participate in one another's sins. There is a community of responsibility attaching to every misdeed. No human since Adam—nay, nor Adam himself—ever sinned entirely to himself. And so I never am called upon to contemplate a crime or a criminal but I feel my conscience pointing at me as one of the accessories."

"In a word," said Evariste Varrillat, the physician, "do you think we are partly to blame for the omission of many of your paternosters, eh?"

Father Jerome smiled.

"No; a man cannot plead so in his own defence; our first father tried that, but the plea was not allowed. But, now, there is our absent friend. I tell you truly this whole community ought to be recognised as partners in his moral errors. Among another people, reared under wiser care

and with better companions, how different might he not have been! How can *we* speak of him as a law-breaker who might have saved him from that name?" Here the speaker turned to Jean Thompson, and changed his speech to English. "A lady sez to me to-day: 'Père Jerome, 'ow dat is a dreadfool dat 'e gone at de coas' of Cuba to be one corsair! Ain't it?' 'Ah, Madame,' I sez, ''tis a terrible! I 'ope de good God will fo'give me an' you fo' dat!'"

Jean Thompson answered quickly—

"You should not have let her say that."

"*Mais*, fo' w'y?"

"Why, because, if you are partly responsible, you ought so much the more to do what you can to shield his reputation. You should have said,"—the attorney changed to French,—"'He is no pirate; he has merely taken out letters of marque and reprisal under the flag of the republic of Carthagena!'"

"*Ah, bah!*" exclaimed Doctor Varrillat, and both he and his brother-in-law, the priest, laughed.

"Why not?" demanded Thompson.

"Oh!" said the physician, with a shrug, "say id thad way iv you wand."

Then, suddenly becoming serious, he was about to add something else, when Père Jerome spoke.

"I will tell you what I could have said. I could have said: 'Madame, yes; 'tis a terrible fo' him. He stum'le in de dark; but that good God will mek it a *mo' terrible* fo' that man, oohever he is, w'at put 'at light out!'"

"But how do you know he is a pirate?" demanded Thompson aggressively.

"How do we know?" said the little priest, returning to French. "Ah! there is no other explanation of the ninety-and-nine stories that come to us, from every port where ships arrive from the north coast of Cuba, of a commander of pirates there who is a marvel of courtesy and gentility——"

"And whose name is Lafitte," said the obstinate attorney.

"And who, nevertheless, is not Lafitte," insisted Père Jerome.

"Daz troo, Jean," said Doctor Varrillat. "We hall know daz troo."

Père Jerome leaned forward over the board and spoke, with an air of secrecy, in French.

"You have heard of the ship which came into port here last Monday. You have heard

that she was boarded by pirates, and that the captain of the ship himself drove them off."

"An incredible story," said Thompson.

"But not so incredible as the truth. I have it from a passenger. There was on the ship a young girl who was very beautiful. She came on deck, where the corsair stood, about to issue his orders, and, more beautiful than ever in the desperation of the moment, confronted him with a small missal spread open, and, her finger on the Apostles' Creed, commanded him to read. He read it, uncovering his head as he read, then stood gazing on her face, which did not quail; and then, with a low bow, said: 'Give me this book and I will do your bidding.' She gave him the book and bade him leave the ship, and he left it unmolested."

Père Jerome looked from the physician to the attorney and back again, once or twice, with his dimpled smile.

"But he speaks English, they say," said Jean Thompson.

"He has, no doubt, learned it since he left us," said the priest.

"But this ship-master, too, says his men called him Lafitte."

"Lafitte? No. Do you not see? It is your brother-in-law, Jean Thompson! It is your wife's brother! Not Lafitte, but" (softly) "Lemaitre! Lemaitre! Capitaine Ursin Lemaitre!"

The two guests looked at each other with a growing drollery on either face, and presently broke into a laugh.

"Ah!" said the doctor, as the three rose up, "you juz kip dad cog-an'-bull fo' yo' negs summon."

Père Jerome's eyes lighted up.

"I goin' to do it!"

"I tell you," said Evariste, turning upon him with sudden gravity, "iv dad is troo, I tell you w'ad is sure-sure! Ursin Lemaitre din kyare nut'n fo' doze creed; *he fall in love!*"

Then, with a smile, turning to Jean Thompson, and back again to Père Jerome—

"But anny'ow you tell it in dad summon dad 'e kyare fo' dad creed."

Père Jerome sat up late that night, writing a letter. The remarkable effects upon a certain mind, effects which we shall presently find him attributing solely to the influences of surrounding nature, may find for some a more sufficient explanation in the

fact that this letter was but one of a series, and that in the rover of doubted identity and incredible eccentricity Père Jerome had a regular correspondent.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAP FITS.

ABOUT two months after the conversation just given, and therefore somewhere about the Christmas holidays of the year 1821, Père Jerome delighted the congregation of his little chapel with the announcement that he had appointed to preach a sermon in French on the following Sabbath —not there, but in the cathedral.

He was much beloved. Notwithstanding that among the clergy there were two or three who shook their heads and raised their eyebrows, and said he would be at least as orthodox if he did not make quite so much of the Bible and quite so little of the dogmas, yet "the common people heard him gladly." When told, one day, of the unfavourable whispers, he smiled a little and answered his informant,—whom he knew to be one of the whisperers himself,—laying a hand kindly upon his shoulder—

"Father Murphy,"—or whatever the name was,—"your words comfort me."

"How is that?"

"Because—'*Væ quum benedixerint mihi homines!*'"[1]

The appointed morning, when it came, was one of those exquisite days in which there is such a universal harmony, that worship rises from the heart like a spring.

"Truly," said Père Jerome to the companion who was to assist him in the mass, "this is a Sabbath day which we do not have to make holy, but only to *keep* so."

Maybe it was one of the secrets of Père Jerome's success as a preacher, that he took more thought as to how he should feel than as to what he should say.

The cathedral of those days was called a very plain old pile, boasting neither beauty nor riches; but to Père Jerome it was very lovely; and before its homely altar, not homely to him, in the performance of those solemn offices (symbols of heaven's mightiest truths), in the hearing of the organ's harmonies, and the yet more eloquent interunion of human voices in the choir, in overlooking the worshipping throng which

[1] "Woe unto me, when all men speak well of me."

knelt under the soft, chromatic lights, and in breathing the sacrificial odours of the chancel, he found a deep and solemn joy. And yet I guess the finest thought of his soul the while was one that came thrice and again—

"Be not deceived, Père Jerome, because saintliness of feeling is easy here. You are the same priest who overslept this morning and overate yesterday, and will, in some way, easily go wrong to-morrow and the day after."

He took it with him when—the Veni Creator sung—he went into the pulpit. Of the sermon he preached, tradition has preserved for us only a few brief sayings, but they are strong and sweet.

"My friends," he said,—this was near the beginning,—"the angry words of God's book are very merciful—they are meant to drive us home; but the tender words, my friends, they are sometimes terrible! Notice these, the tenderest words of the tenderest prayer that ever came from the lips of a blessed martyr—the dying words of the holy Saint Stephen, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' Is there nothing dreadful in that? Read it thus: 'Lord, lay not this sin to

their charge.' Not to the charge of them who stoned him? To whose charge then? Go ask the holy Saint Paul. Three years afterwards, praying in the Temple at Jerusalem, he answered that question: 'I stood by and consented.' He answered for himself only; but the Day must come when all that wicked council that sent Saint Stephen away to be stoned, and all that city of Jerusalem, must hold up the hand and say: 'We, also, Lord—we stood by.' Ah! friends, under the simpler meaning of that dying saint's prayer for the pardon of his murderers is hidden the terrible truth that we all have a share in one another's sins."

Thus Père Jerome touched his key-note. All that time has spared us beside may be given in a few sentences.

"Ah!" he cried once, "if it were merely my own sins that I had to answer for, I might hold up my head before the rest of mankind; but no, no, my friends—we cannot look each other in the face, for each has helped the other to sin. Oh, where is there any room, in this world of common disgrace, for pride? Even if we had no common hope, a common despair ought to bind us

together, and for ever silence the voice of scorn !"

And again, this :—

"Even in the promise to Noë, not again to destroy the race with a flood, there is a whisper of solemn warning. The moral account of the antediluvians was closed off, and the balance brought down in the year of the Deluge. But the account of those who come after runs on and on, and the blessed bow of promise itself warns us that God will not stop it till the Judgment Day ! O God, I thank Thee that the day must come at last when Thou wilt destroy the world, and stop the interest on my account !"

It was about at this point that Père Jerome noticed more particularly than he had done before, sitting among the worshippers near him, a small, sad-faced woman, of pleasing features, but dark and faded, who gave him profound attention. With her was another in better dress, seemingly a girl still in her 'teens, though her face and neck were scrupulously concealed by a heavy veil, and her hands, which were small, by gloves.

"Quadroons," thought he, with a stir of deep pity.

Once, as he uttered some stirring word, he saw the mother and daughter—if such they were—while they still bent their gaze upon him, clasp each other's hand fervently in the daughter's lap. It was at these words—

"My friends, there are thousands of people in this city of New Orleans to whom society gives the ten commandments of God with all the *nots* rubbed out! Ah! good gentlemen! if God sends the poor weakling to purgatory for leaving the right path, where ought some of you to go who strew it with thorns and briers?"

The movement of the pair was only seen because he watched for it. He glanced that way again as he said—

"O God, be very gentle with those children who would be nearer heaven this day had they never had a father and mother, but had got their religious training from such a sky and earth as we have in Louisiana this holy morning! Ah, my friends, nature is a big-print catechism!"

The mother and daughter leaned a little further forward, and exchanged the same spasmodic hand pressure as before. The mother's eyes were full of tears.

"I once knew a man," continued the little priest, glancing to a side aisle where he had noticed Evariste and Jean sitting against each other, "who was carefully taught, from infancy to manhood, this single only principle of life: defiance. Not justice, not righteousness, not even gain; but defiance: defiance to God, defiance to man, defiance to nature, defiance to reason; defiance and defiance and defiance."

"He is going to tell it!" murmured Evariste to Jean.

"This man," continued Père Jerome, "became a smuggler and at last a pirate in the Gulf of Mexico. Lord, lay not this sin to his charge alone! But a strange thing followed. Being in command of men of a sort that to control required to be kept at the austerest distance, he now found himself separated from the human world and thrown into solemn companionship with the sea, with the air, with the storm, the calm, the heavens by day, the heavens by night. My friends, that was the first time in his life that he ever found himself in really good company.

"Now this man had a great aptness for accounts. He had kept them—had ren-

dered them. There was beauty, to him, in a correct, balanced, and closed account. An account unsatisfied was a deformity. The result is plain. That man, looking out night after night upon the grand and holy spectacle of the starry deep above and the watery deep below, was sure to find himself, sooner or later, mastered by the conviction that the great Author of this majestic creation keeps account of it; and one night there came to him, like a spirit walking on the sea, the awful silent question: 'My account with God—how does it stand?' Ah! friends, that is a question which the book of nature does not answer.

"Did I say the book of nature is a catechism? Yes. But, after it answers the first question with 'God,' nothing but questions follow; and so, one day, this man gave a ship full of merchandise for one little book which answered those questions. God help him to understand it; and God help you, monsieur, and you madame, sitting here in your *smuggled clothes*, to beat upon the breast with me and cry, 'I, too, Lord—I, too, stood by and consented.'"

Père Jerome had not intended these for his closing words; but just there, straight

away before his sight, and almost at the furthest door, a man rose slowly from his seat and regarded him steadily with a kind, bronzed, sedate face, and the sermon, as if by a sign of command, was ended. While the Credo was being chanted he was still there, but when, a moment after its close, the eye of Père Jerome returned in that direction, his place was empty.

As the little priest, his labour done and his vestments changed, was turning into the Rue Royale, and leaving the cathedral out of sight, he just had time to understand that two women were purposely allowing him to overtake them, when the one nearer him spoke in the Creole patois, saying with some timid haste—

"Good morning, Père—Père Jerome; Père Jerome, we thank the good God for that sermon."

"Then, so do I," said the little man. They were the same two that he had noticed when he was preaching. The younger one bowed silently; she was a beautiful figure, but the slight effort of Père Jerome's kind eyes to see through the veil was vain. He would presently have passed on, but the one who had spoken before said—

"I thought you lived in the Rue des Ursulines."

"Yes; I am going this way to see a sick person."

The woman looked up at him with an expression of mingled confidence and timidity.

"It must be a blessed thing to be so useful as to be needed by the good God," she said.

Père Jerome smiled.

"God does not need me to look after His sick; but He allows me to do it, just as you let your little boy in frocks carry in chips." He might have added that he loved to do it, quite as much.

It was plain the woman had somewhat to ask, and was trying to get courage to ask it.

"You have a little boy?" asked the priest.

"No, I have only my daughter." She indicated the girl at her side. Then she began to say something else, stopped, and with much nervousness asked—

"Père Jerome, what was the name of that man?"

"His name?" said the priest. "You wish to know his name?"

"Yes, Monsieur" (or *Miché*, as she spoke

it); "it was such a beautiful story." The speaker's companion looked another way.

"His name," said Father Jerome—"some say one name and some another. Some think it was Jean Lafitte, the famous; you have heard of him? And do you go to my church, Madame——?"

"No, Miché; not in the past; but from this time, yes. My name"—she choked a little, and it evidently gave her pleasure to offer this mark of confidence—"is Madame Delphine—Delphine Carraze."

CHAPTER VI.

A CRY OF DISTRESS.

PÈRE JEROME'S smile and exclamation, as some days later he entered his parlour in response to the announcement of a visitor, were indicative of hearty greeting rather than surprise.

"Madame Delphine!"

Yet surprise could hardly have been altogether absent, for though another Sunday had not yet come around, the slim smallish figure sitting in a corner looking very much alone, and clad in dark attire, which seemed to have been washed a trifle too often, was Delphine Carraze on her second visit. And this, he was confident, was over and above an attendance in the confessional, where he was sure he had recognised her voice.

She rose bashfully and gave her hand, then looked to the floor, and began a faltering speech, with a swallowing motion in the throat, smiled weakly and commenced again,

speaking, as before, in a gentle, low note, frequently lifting up and casting down her eyes, while shadows of anxiety and smiles of apology chased each other rapidly across her face. She was trying to ask his advice.

"Sit down," said he; and when they had taken seats she resumed with downcast eyes—

"You know—probably I should have said this in the confessional, but——"

"No matter, Madame Delphine; I understand; you did not want an oracle, perhaps; you want a friend."

She lifted her eyes, shining with tears, and dropped them again.

"I"—she ceased. "I have done a"—she dropped her head and shook it despondingly—"a cruel thing." The tears rolled from her eyes as she turned away her face.

Père Jerome remained silent, and presently she turned again, with the evident intention of speaking at length.

"It began nineteen years ago—by"—her eyes, which she had lifted, fell lower than ever, her brow and neck were suffused with blushes, and she murmured—"I fell in love."

She said no more, and by and by Père Jerome replied—

"Well, Madame Delphine, to love is the right of every soul. I believe in love. If your love was pure and lawful, I am sure your angel guardian smiled upon you; and if it was not, I cannot say you have nothing to answer for, and yet I think God may have said: 'She is a quadroone; all the rights of her womanhood trampled in the mire, sin made easy to her—almost compulsory—charge it to account of whom it may concern.'"

"No, no!" said Madame Delphine, looking up quickly, "some of it might fall upon —" Her eyes fell, and she commenced biting her lips and nervously pinching little folds in her skirt. "He was good—as good as the law would let him be—better, indeed, for he left me property, which really the strict law does not allow. He loved our little daughter very much. He wrote to his mother and sisters, owning all his error and asking them to take the child and bring her up. I sent her to them when he died, which was soon after, and did not see my child for sixteen years. But we wrote to each other all the time, and she loved me. And then—at last——" Madame Delphine ceased speaking, but went on diligently with

her agitated fingers, turning down foolish hems lengthwise of her laps.

"At last, your mother-heart conquered," said Père Jerome.

She nodded.

"The sisters married, the mother died; I saw that even where she was she did not escape the reproach of her birth and blood, and when she asked me to let her come——" The speaker's brimming eyes rose an instant. "I know it was wicked, but—I said, come."

The tears dripped through her hands upon her dress.

"Was it she who was with you last Sunday?"

"Yes."

"And now you do not know what to do with her?"

"*Ah! c'est ça, oui!*—that is it."

"Does she look like you, Madame Delphine?"

"Oh, thank God, no! you would never believe she was my daughter; she is white and beautiful!"

"You thank God for that which is your main difficulty, Madame Delphine."

"Alas! yes."

Père Jerome laid his palms tightly across his knees with his arms bowed out, and fixed his eyes upon the ground, pondering.

"I suppose she is a sweet, good daughter?" said he, glancing at Madame Delphine, without changing his attitude.

Her answer was to raise her eyes rapturously.

"Which gives us the dilemma in its fullest force," said the priest, speaking as if to the floor. "She has no more place than if she had dropped upon a strange planet." He suddenly looked up with a brightness which almost as quickly passed away, and then he looked down again. His happy thought was the cloister; but he instantly said to himself: "They cannot have overlooked that choice, except intentionally — which they have a right to do." He could do nothing but shake his head.

"And suppose you should suddenly die," he said: he wanted to get at once to the worst.

The woman made a quick gesture, and buried her head in her handkerchief, with the stifled cry—

"O Olive, my daughter!"

"Well, Madame Delphine," said Père

Jerome, more buoyantly, "one thing is sure; we *must* find a way out of this trouble."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, looking heavenward, "if it might be!"

"But it must be!" said the priest.

"But how shall it be?" asked the desponding woman.

"Ah!" said Père Jerome, with a shrug, "God knows."

"Yes," said the quadroone, with a quick sparkle in her gentle eye; "and I know, if God would tell anybody, He would tell you!"

The priest smiled and rose.

"Do you think so? Well, leave me to think of it. I will ask Him."

"And He will tell you!" she replied. "And He will bless you!" She rose and gave her hand. As she withdrew it she smiled. "I had such a strange dream," she said, backing toward the door.

"Yes?"

"Yes. I got my troubles all mixed up with your sermon. I dreamed I made that pirate the guardian of my daughter."

Père Jerome smiled also, and shrugged.

"To you, Madame Delphine, as you are

placed, every white man in this country, on land or on water, is a pirate, and of all pirates, I think that one is, without doubt, the best."

"Without doubt," echoed Madame Delphine wearily, still withdrawing backward. Père Jerome stepped forward and opened the door.

The shadow of some one approaching it from without fell upon the threshold, and a man entered, dressed in dark blue cotton-ade, lifting from his head a fine Panama hat, and from a broad smooth brow, fair where the hat had covered it and dark below, gently stroking back his very soft, brown locks. Madame Delphine slightly started aside, while Père Jerome reached silently, but eagerly, forward, grasped a larger hand than his own, and motioned its owner to a seat. Madame Delphine's eyes ventured no higher than to discover that the shoes of the visitor were of white duck.

"Well, Père Jerome," she said, in a hurried undertone, "I am just going to say Hail Marys all the time till you find that out for me!"

"Well, I hope that will be soon, Madame Carraze. Good day, Madame Carraze."

And as she departed, the priest turned to the newcomer and extended both hands, saying, in the same familiar dialect in which he had been addressing the quadroone :—

"Well-a-day, old playmate! After so many years!"

They sat down side by side, like husband and wife, the priest playing with the other's hand, and talked of times and seasons past, often mentioning Evariste and often Jean.

Madame Delphine stopped short half-way home and returned to Père Jerome's. His entry door was wide open, and the parlour door ajar. She passed through the one and with downcast eyes was standing at the other, her hand lifted to knock, when the door was drawn open and the white duck shoes passed out. She saw, besides, this time, the blue cottonade suit.

"Yes," the voice of Père Jerome was saying, as his face appeared in the door—"Ah! Madame——"

"I lef' my para*sol*," said Madame Delphine, in English.

There was this quiet evidence of a defiant spirit hidden somewhere down under her general timidity, that, against a fierce con-

ventional prohibition, she wore a bonnet instead of the turban of her caste, and carried a parasol.

Père Jerome turned and brought it.

He made a motion in the direction in which the late visitor had disappeared.

"Madame Delphine, you saw dat man?"

"Not his face."

"You couldn' billieve me iv I tell you w'at dat man pur*pose* to do!"

"Is dad so, Père Jerome?"

"He 's goin' to hopen a bank!"

"Ah!" said Madame Delphine, seeing she was expected to be astonished.

Père Jerome evidently longed to tell something that was best kept secret; he repressed the impulse, but his heart had to say something. He threw forward one hand, and looking pleasantly at Madame Delphine, with his lips dropped apart, clenched his extended hand, and thrusting it toward the ground, said in a solemn undertone:—

"He is God's own banker, Madame Delphine."

CHAPTER VII.

MICHÉ VIGNEVIELLE.

MADAME DELPHINE sold one of the corner lots of her property. She had almost no revenue, and now and then a piece had to go. As a consequence of the sale, she had a few large bank-notes sewed up in her petticoat, and one day—may be a fortnight after her tearful interview with Père Jerome—she found it necessary to get one of these changed into small money. She was in the Rue Toulouse, looking from one side to the other for a bank which was not in that street at all, when she noticed a small sign hanging above a door, bearing the name "Vignevielle." She looked in. Père Jerome had told her (when she had gone to him to ask where she should apply for change) that if she could only wait a few days, there would be a new concern opened in Toulouse Street,—it really seemed as if Vignevielle was the name, if she could judge; it looked to be, and it was, a private

banker's,—"U. L. Vignevielle's," according to a larger inscription which met her eyes as she ventured in. Behind the counter, exchanging some last words with a busy-mannered man outside, who, in withdrawing, seemed bent on running over Madame Delphine, stood the man in blue cottonade, whom she had met in Père Jerome's doorway. Now, for the first time, she saw his face, its strong, grave, human kindness shining softly on each and every bronzed feature. The recognition was mutual. He took pains to speak first, saying, in a reassuring tone, and in the language he had last heard her use—

"'Ow I kin serve you, Madame?"

"Iv you pliz, mague dad bill change, Miché."

She pulled from her pocket a wad of dark cotton handkerchief, from which she began to untie the imprisoned note. Madame Delphine had an uncommonly sweet voice, and it seemed so to strike Monsieur Vignevielle. He spoke to her once or twice more, as he waited on her, each time in English, as though he enjoyed the humble melody of its tone, and presently, as she turned to go, he said—

"Madame Carraze."

She started a little, but bethought herself instantly that he had heard her name in Père Jerome's parlour. The good father might even have said a few words about her after her first departure; he had such an overflowing heart.

"Madame Carraze," said Monsieur Vignevielle, "doze kine of note wad you '*an*' me juz now is bein' contrefit. You muz tek kyar from doze kine of note. You see——" He drew from his cash-drawer a note resembling the one he had just changed for her, and proceeded to point out certain tests of genuineness. The counterfeit, he said, was so-and-so.

"Bud," she exclaimed, with much dismay, "dad was de manner of my bill! Id muz be—led me see dad bill wad I give you, —if you pliz, Miché."

Monsieur Vignevielle turned to engage in conversation with an employé and a new visitor, and gave no sign of hearing Madame Delphine's voice. She asked a second time, with like result, lingered timidly, and as he turned to give his attention to a third visitor, reiterated—

"Miché Vignevielle, I wizh you pliz led——"

"Madame Carraze," he said, turning so suddenly as to make the frightened little woman start, but extending his palm with a show of frankness, and assuming a look of benignant patience, "'ow I kin fine doze note now, mongs' all de rez? Iv you pliz nod to mague me doze troub'."

The dimmest shadow of a smile seemed only to give his words a more kindly authoritative import, and as he turned away again with a manner suggestive of finality, Madame Delphine found no choice but to depart. But she went away loving the ground beneath the feet of Monsieur U. L. Vignevielle.

"O Père Jerome!" she exclaimed in the corrupt French of her caste, meeting the little father on the street a few days later, "you told the truth that day in your parlour. *Mo conné li à ç't heure.* I know him now; he is just what you called him."

"Why do you not make him *your* banker, also, Madame Delphine?"

"I have done so this very day!" she replied, with more happiness in her eyes than Père Jerome had ever before seen there.

"Madame Delphine," he said, his own eyes sparkling, "make *him* your daughter's

guardian; for myself, being a priest, it would not be best; but ask him; I believe he will not refuse you."

Madame Delphine's face grew still brighter as he spoke.

"It was in my mind," she said.

Yet to the timorous Madame Delphine many trifles became, one after another, an impediment to the making of this proposal, and many weeks elapsed before further delay was positively without excuse. But at length, one day in May (1822), in a small private office behind Monsieur Vignevielle's banking-room,—he sitting beside a table, and she, more timid and demure than ever, having just taken a chair by the door,—she said, trying with a little bashful laugh, to make the matter seem unimportant, and yet with some tremor of voice—

"Miché Vignevielle, I bin maguing my will." (Having commenced their acquaintance in English, they spoke nothing else).

"'Tis a good idy," responded the banker.

"I kin mague you de troub' to kib dad will fo' me, Miché Vignevielle?"

"Yez."

She looked up with grateful reassurance; but her eyes dropped again as she said—

"Miché Vignevielle——" Here she choked, and began her peculiar motion of laying folds in the skirt of her dress, with trembling fingers. She lifted her eyes, and as they met the look of deep and placid kindness that was in his face, some courage returned, and she said—

"Miché."

"Wad you wand?" asked he gently.

"If it arrive to me to die——"

"Yez?"

Her words were scarcely audible—

"I wand you teg kyah my lill' girl."

"You 'ave one lill' gal, Madame Carraze?"

She nodded with her face down.

"An' you godd some mo' chillen?"

"No."

"I nevva know dad, Madame Carraze. She 's a lill' small girl?"

"Mothers forget their daughters' stature," Madame Delphine said.

"Yez."

For a few moments neither spoke, and then Monsieur Vignevielle said—

"I will do dad."

"Lag she been you' h-own?" asked the mother, suffering from her own boldness.

"She 's a good lill' chile, eh?"

"Miché, she 's a lill' hangel!" exclaimed Madame Delphine, with a look of distress.

"Yez; I teg kyah 'v 'er, lag my h-own. I mague dad promise."

"But——" There was something still in the way, Madame Delphine seemed to think.

The banker waited in silence.

"I suppose you will want to see my lill' girl?"

He smiled; for she looked at him as if she would implore him to decline.

"Oh, I tek you' word fo' hall dad, Madame Carraze. It mague no differend wad she loog lag; I don' wan' see 'er."

Madame Delphine's parting smile—she went very shortly—was gratitude beyond speech.

Monsieur Vignevielle returned to the seat he had left, and resumed a newspaper—the *Louisiana Gazette*, in all probability—which he had laid down upon Madame Delphine's entrance. His eyes fell upon a paragraph which had previously escaped his notice. There they rested. Either he read it over and over unwearyingly, or he was lost in thought. Jean Thompson entered.

"Now," said Mr. Thompson, in a suppressed tone, bending a little across the table, and laying one palm upon a package of papers which lay in the other, "it is completed. You could retire from your business any day inside of six hours without loss to anybody." (Both here and elsewhere, let it be understood that where good English is given the words were spoken in good French.)

Monsieur Vignevielle raised his eyes and extended the paper to the attorney, who received it and read the paragraph. Its substance was that a certain vessel of the navy had returned from a cruise in the Gulf of Mexico and Straits of Florida, where she had done valuable service against the pirates —having, for instance, destroyed in one fortnight in January last twelve pirate vessels afloat, two on the stocks, and three establishments ashore.

"United States brig *Porpoise*," repeated Jean Thompson. "Do you know her?"

"We are acquainted," said Monsieur Vignevielle.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHE.

A QUIET footstep, a grave new presence on financial sidewalks, a neat garb slightly out of date, a gently strong and kindly pensive face, a silent bow, a new sign in the Rue Toulouse, a lone figure with a cane, walking in meditation in the evening light under the willows of Canal Marigny, a long-darkened window relighted in the Rue Conti—these were all; a fall of dew would scarce have been more quiet than was the return of Ursin Lemaitre-Vignevielle to the precincts of his birth and early life.

But we hardly give the event its right name. It was Capitaine Lemaitre who had disappeared; it was Monsieur Vignevielle who had come back. The pleasures, the haunts, the companions that had once held out their charms to the impetuous youth, offered no enticements to Madame Delphine's banker. There is this to be said even for the pride

his grandfather had taught him, that it had always held him above low indulgences; and though he had dallied with kings, queens, and knaves through all the mazes of Faro, Rondeau, and Craps, he had done it loftily; but now he maintained a peaceful estrangement from all. Evariste and Jean, themselves, found him only by seeking.

"It is the right way," he said to Père Jerome, the day we saw him there. "Ursin Lemaitre is dead. I have buried him. He left a will. I am his executor."

"He is crazy," said his lawyer brother-in-law impatiently.

"On the contr-y," replied the little priest, "'e 'as come 'ad hisse'f."

Evariste spoke.

"Look at his face, Jean. Men with that kind of face are the last to go crazy."

"You have not proved that," replied Jean, with an attorney's obstinacy. "You should have heard him talk the other day about that newspaper paragraph. 'I have taken Ursin Lemaitre's head; I have it with me; I claim the reward, but I desire to commute it to citizenship.' He is crazy."

Of course Jean Thompson did not believe what he said; but he said it, and, in his

vexation, repeated it, on the *banquettes* and at the clubs; and presently it took the shape of a sly rumour, that the returned rover was a trifle snarled in his top-hamper.

This whisper was helped into circulation by many trivial eccentricities of manner and by the unaccountable oddness of some of his transactions in business.

"My dear sir!" cried his astounded lawyer, one day, "you are not running a charitable institution!"

"How do you know?" said Monsieur Vignevielle. There the conversation ceased.

"Why do you not found hospitals and asylums at once," asked the attorney, at another time, with a vexed laugh, "and get the credit of it?"

"And make the end worse than the beginning," said the banker, with a gentle smile, turning away to a desk of books.

"Bah!" muttered Jean Thompson.

Monsieur Vignevielle betrayed one very bad symptom. Wherever he went he seemed looking for somebody. It may have been perceptible only to those who were sufficiently interested in him to study his movements; but those who saw it once saw it always. He never passed an open door

or gate but he glanced in; and often, where it stood but slightly ajar, you might see him give it a gentle push with his hand or cane. It was very singular.

He walked much alone after dark. The *guichinangoes* (garotters, we might say), at those times the city's particular terror by night, never crossed his path. He was one of those men for whom danger appears to stand aside.

One beautiful summer night, when all nature seemed hushed in ecstasy, the last blush gone that told of the sun's parting, Monsieur Vignevielle, in the course of one of those contemplative, uncompanioned walks which it was his habit to take, came slowly along the more open portion of the Rue Royale, with a step which was soft without intention, occasionally touching the end of his stout cane gently to the ground and looking upward among his old acquaintances, the stars.

It was one of those southern nights under whose spell all the sterner energies of the mind cloak themselves and lie down in bivouac, and the fancy and the imagination, that cannot sleep, slip their fetters and escape, beckoned away from behind every

flowering bush and sweet-smelling tree, and every stretch of lonely half-lighted walk, by the genius of poetry. The air stirred softly now and then, and was still again, as if the breezes lifted their expectant pinions and lowered them once more, awaiting the rising of the moon in a silence which fell upon the fields, the roads, the gardens, the walls, and the suburban and half-suburban streets, like a pause in worship. And anon she rose.

Monsieur Vignevielle's steps were bent toward the more central part of the town, and he was presently passing along a high, close, board-fence, on the right-hand side of the way, when, just within this enclosure, and almost overhead, in the dark boughs of a large orange-tree, a mocking-bird began the first low flute-notes of his all-night song. It may have been only the nearness of the songster that attracted the passer's attention, but he paused and looked up.

And then he remarked something more,—that the air where he had stopped was filled with the overpowering sweetness of the night-jasmine. He looked around; it could only be inside the fence. There was a gate just there. Would he push it, as his wont was? The grass was growing about it in a

thick turf, as though the entrance had not been used for years. An iron staple clasped the cross-bar, and was driven deep into the gate-post. But now an eye that had been in the blacksmithing business—an eye which had later received high training as an eye for fastenings—fell upon that staple, and saw at a glance that the wood had shrunk from it, and it had sprung from its hold, though without falling out. The strange habit asserted itself; he laid his large hand upon the cross-bar; the turf at the base yielded, and the tall gate was drawn partly open.

At that moment, as at the moment whenever he drew or pushed a door or gate, or looked in at a window, he was thinking of one, the image of whose face and form had never left his inner vision since the day it had met him in his life's path and turned him face about from the way of destruction.

The bird ceased. The cause of the interruption, standing within the opening, saw before him, much obscured by its own numerous shadows, a broad, ill-kept, many-flowered garden, among whose untrimmed rose-trees and tangled vines, and often, also, in its old walks of pounded shell, the coco grass and crab-grass had spread riotously,

and sturdy weeds stood up in bloom. He stepped in and drew the gate to after him. There, very near by, was the clump of jasmine, whose ravishing odour had tempted him. It stood just beyond a brightly moonlit path, which turned from him in a curve toward the residence, a little distance to the right, and escaped the view at a point where it seemed more than likely a door of the house might open upon it. While he still looked, there fell upon his ear, from around that curve, a light footstep on the broken shells, —one only, and then all was for a moment still again. Had he mistaken? No. The same soft click was repeated nearer by, a pale glimpse of robes came through the tangle, and then, plainly to view, appeared an outline—a presence—a form—a spirit—a girl!

From throat to instep she was as white as Cynthia. Something above the medium height, slender, lithe, her abundant hair rolling in dark, rich waves back from her brows and down from her crown, and falling in two heavy plaits beyond her round, broadly girt waist and full to her knees, a few escaping locks eddying lightly on her graceful neck and her temples,—her arms,

half hid in a snowy mist of sleeve, let down to guide her spotless skirts free from the dewy touch of the grass,—straight down the path she came!

Will she stop? Will she turn aside? Will she espy the dark form in the deep shade of the orange, and, with one piercing scream, wheel and vanish? She draws near. She approaches the jasmine; she raises her arms, the sleeves falling like a vapour down to the shoulder; rises upon tiptoe, and plucks a spray. O Memory! Can it be? *Can it be?* Is this his quest, or is it lunacy? The ground seems to M. Vignevielle the unsteady sea, and he to stand once more on a deck. And she? As she stands now, if she but turn toward the orange, the whole glory of the moon will shine upon her face. His heart stands still; he is waiting for her to do that. She reaches up again; this time a bunch for her mother. That neck and throat! Now she fastens a spray in her hair. The mocking-bird cannot withhold; he breaks into song—she turns—she turns her face—it is she, it is she! Madame Delphine's daughter is the girl he met on the ship.

CHAPTER IX.

OLIVE.

SHE was just passing seventeen—that beautiful year when the heart of the maiden still beats quickly with the surprise of her new dominion, while with gentle dignity her brow accepts the holy coronation of womanhood. The forehead and temples beneath her loosely bound hair were fair without paleness, and meek without languor. She had the soft, lack-lustre beauty of the South; no ruddiness of coral, no waxen white, no pink of shell; no heavenly blue in the glance; but a face that seemed, in all its other beauties, only a tender accompaniment for the large, brown, melting eyes, where the openness of child-nature mingled dreamily with the sweet mysteries of maiden thought. We say no colour of shell on face or throat; but this was no deficiency, that which took its place being the warm, transparent tint of sculptured ivory.

This side doorway which led from Madame Delphine's house into her garden was overarched partly by an old remnant of vine-covered lattice, and partly by a crape-myrtle, against whose small, polished trunk leaned a rustic seat. Here Madame Delphine and Olive loved to sit when the twilights were balmy or the moon was bright.

"*Chérie*," said Madame Delphine on one of these evenings, "why do you dream so much?"

She spoke in the *patois* most natural to her, and which her daughter had easily learned.

The girl turned her face to her mother, and smiled, then dropped her glance to the hands in her own lap, which were listlessly handling the end of a ribbon. The mother looked at her with a fond solicitude. Her dress was white again; this was but one night since that in which Monsieur Vignevielle had seen her at the bush of night-jasmine. He had not been discovered, but had gone away, shutting the gate, and leaving it as he had found it.

Her head was uncovered. Its plaited masses, quite black in the moonlight, hung

down and coiled upon the bench, by her side. Her chaste drapery was of that revived classic order which the world of fashion was again laying aside to reassume the mediæval bondage of the stay-lace ; for New Orleans was behind the fashionable world, and Madame Delphine and her daughter were behind New Orleans. A delicate scarf, pale blue, of lightly netted worsted, fell from either shoulder down beside her hands. The look that was bent upon her changed perforce to one of gentle admiration. She seemed the goddess of the garden.

Olive glanced up. Madame Delphine was not prepared for the movement, and on that account repeated her question—

"What are you thinking about?"

The dreamer took the hand that was laid upon hers between her own palms, bowed her head, and gave it a soft kiss.

The mother submitted. Wherefore, in the silence which followed, a daughter's conscience felt the burden of having withheld an answer, and Olive presently said, as the pair sat looking up into the sky—

"I was thinking of Père Jerome's sermon."

Madame Delphine had feared so. Olive had lived on it ever since the day it was

preached. The poor mother was almost ready to repent having ever afforded her the opportunity of hearing it. Meat and drink had become of secondary value to her daughter; she fed upon the sermon.

Olive felt her mother's thought and knew that her mother knew her own; but now that she had confessed, she would ask a question—

"Do you think, *maman*, that Père Jerome knows it was I who gave that missal?"

"No," said Madame Delphine, "I am sure he does not."

Another question came more timidly—

"Do—do you think he knows *him*?"

"Yes, I do. He said in his sermon he did."

Both remained for a long time very still, watching the moon gliding in and through among the small dark-and-white clouds. At last the daughter spoke again—

"I wish I was Père—I wish I was as good as Père Jerome."

"My child," said Madame Delphine, her tone betraying a painful summoning of strength to say what she had lacked the courage to utter,—"My child, I pray the good God you will not let your heart go

after one whom you may never see in this world!"

The maiden turned her glance, and their eyes met. She cast her arms about her mother's neck, laid her cheek upon it for a moment, and then, feeling the maternal tear, lifted her lips, and, kissing her, said—

"I will not! I will not!"

But the voice was one, not of glad consent, but of desperate resolution.

"It would be useless, anyhow," said the mother, laying her arm around her daughter's waist.

Olive repeated the kiss, prolonging it passionately

"I have nobody but you," murmured the girl; "I am a poor quadroone!"

She threw back her plaited hair for a third embrace, when a sound in the shrubbery startled them.

"*Qui ci ça?*" called Madame Delphine, in a frightened voice, as the two stood up, holding to each other.

No answer.

"It was only the dropping of a twig," she whispered, after a long holding of the breath. But they went into the house and barred it everywhere.

It was no longer pleasant to sit up. They retired, and in course of time, but not soon, they fell asleep, holding each other very tight, and fearing, even in their dreams, to hear another twig fall.

CHAPTER X.

BIRDS.

MONSIEUR VIGNEVIELLE looked in at no more doors or windows; but if the disappearance of this symptom was a favourable sign, others came to notice which were especially bad,—for instance, wakefulness. At well-nigh any hour of the night, the city guard, which itself dared not patrol singly, would meet him on his slow, unmolested, sky-gazing walk.

"Seems to enjoy it," said Jean Thompson; "the worst sort of evidence. If he showed distress of mind, it would not be so bad; but his calmness,—ugly feature."

The attorney had held his ground so long that he began really to believe it was tenable.

By day, it is true, Monsieur Vignevielle was at his post in his quiet "bank." Yet here, day by day, he was the source of more and more vivid astonishment to those who

held preconceived notions of a banker's calling. As a banker, at least, he was certainly out of balance; while, as a promenader, it seemed to those who watched him that his ruling idea had now veered about, and that of late he was ever on the quiet alert, not to find, but to evade, somebody.

"Olive, my child," whispered Madame Delphine one morning, as the pair were kneeling side by side on the tiled floor of the church, "yonder is Miché Vignevielle! If you will only look at once—he is just passing a little in—— Ah, much too slow again; he stepped out by the side door."

The mother thought it a strange providence that Monsieur Vignevielle should always be disappearing whenever Olive was with her.

One early dawn, Madame Delphine, with a small empty basket on her arm, stepped out upon the *banquette* in front of her house, shut and fastened the door very softly, and stole out in the direction whence you could faintly catch, in the stillness of the daybreak, the songs of the Gascon butchers and the pounding of their meat-axes on the stalls of the market-house. She was going to see if she could find some birds for Olive,

—the child's appetite was so poor; and, as she went out, she would drop an early prayer at the cathedral. Faith and works.

"One must venture something, sometimes, in the cause of religion," thought she, as she started timorously on her way. But she had not gone a dozen steps before she repented her temerity. There was some one behind her.

There should not be anything terrible in a footstep merely because it is masculine; but Madame Delphine's mind was not prepared to consider that. A terrible secret was haunting her. Yesterday morning she had found a shoe-track in the garden. She had not disclosed the discovery to Olive, but she had hardly closed her eyes the whole night.

The step behind her now might be the fall of that very shoe. She quickened her pace, but did not leave the sound behind. She hurried forward almost at a run; yet it was still there—no further, no nearer. Two frights were upon her at once one for herself, another for Olive, left alone in the house; but she had but the one prayer—"God protect my child!" After a fearful time she reached a place of safety, the

cathedral. There, panting, she knelt long enough to know the pursuit was, at least, suspended, and then arose, hoping and praying all the saints that she might find the way clear for her return in all haste to Olive.

She approached a different door from that by which she had entered, her eyes in all directions, and her heart in her throat.

"Madame Carraze!"

She started wildly and almost screamed, though the voice was soft and mild. Monsieur Vignevielle came slowly forward from the shade of the wall. They met beside a bench, upon which she dropped her basket.

"Ah, Miché Vignevielle. I thang de good God to mid you!"

"Is dad so, Madame Carraze? Fo' wy dad is?"

"A man was chase me all dad way since my 'ouse!"

"Yes, Madame, I sawed him."

"You sawed 'im! Oo it was?"

"'Twas only one man wad is a foolizh. De people say he 's crezzie. *Mais*, he don' goin' to meg you no 'arm."

"But I was scare' fo' my lill' girl."

"Noboddie don' goin' trouble you' lill' gal, Madame Carraze."

Madame Delphine looked up into the speaker's strangely kind and patient eyes, and drew sweet reassurance from them.

"Madame," said Monsieur Vignevielle, "wad pud you hout so hearly dis morning?"

She told him her errand. She asked if he thought she would find anything.

"Yez," he said, "it was possible—a few lill' *bécassines-de-mer*, ou somezin' ligue. But fo' w'y you lill' gal lose doze hapetide?"

"Ah, Miché,"—Madame Delphine might have tried a thousand times again without ever succeeding half so well in lifting the curtain upon the whole, sweet, tender, old, old-fashioned truth,—"Ah, Miché, she wone tell me!"

"Bud, anny'ow, Madame, wad you thing?"

"Miché," she replied, looking up again with a tear standing in either eye, and then looking down once more as she began to speak, "I thing—I thing she 's lonesome."

"You thing?"

She nodded.

"Ah! Madame Carraze," he said, partly extending his hand, "you see? 'Tis impossible to mague you' 'owze shud so tighd

to priv-en dad. Madame, I med one mizteg."

"Ah, *non*, Miché!"

"Yez. There har nod one poss'bil'ty fo' me to be dad guardian of you' daughteh!"

Madame Delphine started with surprise and alarm.

"There is ondly one wad can be," he continued.

"But oo, Miché?"

"God."

"Ah, Miche Vignevielle——" She looked at him appealingly.

"I don' goin' to dizzerd you, Madame Carraze," he said.

She lifted her eyes. They filled. She shook her head, a tear fell, she bit her lip, smiled, and suddenly dropped her face into both hands, sat down upon the bench and wept until she shook

"You dunno wad I mean, Madame Carraze?"

She did not know.

"I mean dad guardian of you' daughteh godd to fine 'er now one 'uzban'; an' noboddie are hable to do dad egceb de good God 'imsev. But, Madame, I tell you wad I do."

She rose up. He continued—

"Go h-open you' 'owze; I fin' you' daughteh dad 'uzban'."

Madame Delphine was a helpless, timid thing; but her eyes showed she was about to resent this offer. Monsieur Vignevielle put forth his hand—it touched her shoulder—and said, kindly still, and without eagerness—

"One w'ite man, Madame; 'tis prattycabble. I *know* 'tis prattycabble. One w'ite jantleman, Madame. You can truz me. I goin' fedge 'im. H-ondly you go h-open you' 'owze."

Madame Delphine looked down, twining her handkerchief among her fingers.

He repeated his proposition.

"You will come firz by you'se'f?" she asked.

"Iv you wand."

She lifted up once more her eye of faith. That was her answer.

"Come," he said gently, "I wan' sen' some bird ad you' lill' gal."

And they went away, Madame Delphine's spirit grown so exaltedly bold that she said as they went, though a violent blush followed her words—

"Miché Vignevielle, I thing Père Jerome mighd be ab'e to tell you someboddie."

CHAPTER XI.

FACE TO FACE.

MADAME DELPHINE found her house neither burned nor rifled.

"*Ah! ma piti sans papa!* Ah! my little fatherless one!" Her faded bonnet fell back between her shoulders, hanging on by the strings, and her dropped basket, with its "few lill' *beccassines-le-mer*" dangling from the handle, rolled out its okra and soup-joint upon the floor. "*Ma piti!* kiss! —kiss!—kiss!"

"But is it good news you have, or bad?" cried the girl, a fourth or fifth time.

"*Dieu sait, ma c'ère; mo pas connè!* God knows, my darling; I cannot tell!"

The mother dropped into a chair, covered her face with her apron, and burst into tears, then looked up with an effort to smile, and wept afresh.

"What have you been doing?" asked the daughter, in a long-drawn, fondling tone.

She leaned forward and unfastened her mother's bonnet-strings. "Why do you cry?"

"For nothing at all, my darling? for nothing—I am such a fool."

The girl's eyes filled. The mother looked up into her face and said—

"No, it is nothing, nothing, only that—" turning her head from side to side with a slow, emotional emphasis, "Miché Vignevielle is the best—*best* man on the good Lord's earth!"

Olive drew a chair close to her mother, sat down, and took the little yellow hands into her own white lap, and looked tenderly into her eyes. Madame Delphine felt herself yielding; she must make a show of telling something—

"He sent you those birds!"

The girl drew her face back a little. The little woman turned away, trying in vain to hide her tearful smile, and they laughed together, Olive mingling a daughter's fond kiss with her laughter.

"There is something else," she said, "and you shall tell me."

"Yes," replied Madame Delphine, "only let me get composed."

But she did not get so. Later in the morning she came to Olive with the timid yet startling proposal that they would do what they could to brighten up the long-neglected front room. Olive was mystified and troubled, but consented, and thereupon the mother's spirits rose.

The work began, and presently ensued all the thumping, the trundling, the lifting and letting down, the raising and swallowing of dust, and the smells of turpentine, brass, pumice, and woollen rags that go to characterise a housekeeper's *emeute;* and still, as the work progressed, Madame Delphine's heart grew light, and her little black eyes sparkled.

"We like a clean parlour, my daughter, even though no one is ever coming to see us, eh?" she said, as entering the apartment she at last sat down, late in the afternoon. She had put on her best attire.

Olive was not there to reply. The mother called, but got no answer. She rose with an uneasy heart, and met her a few steps beyond the door that opened into the garden, in a path which came up from an old latticed bower. Olive was approaching slowly, her face pale and wild. There

was an agony of hostile dismay in the look, and the trembling and appealing tone with which, taking the frightened mother's cheeks between her palms, she said—

"*Ah! ma mère, qui vini 'ci ce soir?* Who is coming here this evening?"

"Why, my dear child, I was just saying, we like a clean——"

But the daughter was desperate—

"Oh, tell me, my mother, *who* is coming?"

"My darling, it is our blessed friend, Miché Vignevielle!"

"To see me?" cried the girl.

"Yes."

"O my mother, what have you done?"

"Why, Olive, my child," exclaimed the little mother, bursting into tears, "do you forget it is Miché Vignevielle who has promised to protect you when I die?"

The daughter had turned away, and entered the door; but she faced around again, and extending her arms toward her mother, cried—

"How can—he is a white man—I am a poor——"

"Ah! *chérie*," replied Madame Delphine, seizing the outstretched hands, "it is there—it is there that he shows himself the best

man alive! He sees that difficulty; he proposes to meet it; he says he will find you a suitor!"

Olive freed her hands violently, motioned her mother back, and stood proudly drawn up, flashing an indignation too great for speech; but the next moment she had uttered a cry, and was sobbing on the floor.

The mother knelt beside her and threw an arm about her shoulders.

"O my sweet daughter, you must not cry! I did not want to tell you at all! I did not want to tell you! It isn't fair for you to cry so hard. Miché Vignevielle says you shall have the one you wish, or none at all, Olive, or none at all."

"None at all! none at all! None, none, none!"

"No, no, Olive," said the mother, "none at all. He brings none with him to-night, and shall bring none with him hereafter."

Olive rose suddenly, silently declined her mother's aid, and went alone to their chamber in the half-story.

Madame Delphine wandered drearily from door to window, from window to door, and presently into the newly furbished front

room, which now seemed dismal beyond degree. There was a great Argand lamp in one corner. How she had laboured that day to prepare it for evening illumination! A little beyond it, on the wall, hung a crucifix. She knelt under it, with her eyes fixed upon it, and thus, silently, remained until its outline was undistinguishable in the deepening shadows of evening.

She arose. A few minutes later, as she was trying to light the lamp, an approaching step on the sidewalk seemed to pause. Her heart stood still. She softly laid the phosphorus-box out of her hands. A shoe grated softly on the stone step, and Madame Delphine, her heart beating in great thuds, without waiting for a knock, opened the door, bowed low, and exclaimed, in a soft, perturbed voice—

"Miché Vignevielle!"

He entered, hat in hand, and with that almost noiseless tread which we have noticed. She gave him a chair and closed the door; then hastened, with words of apology, back to her task of lighting the lamp. But her hands paused in their work again—Olive's step was on the stairs; then it came off the stairs; then it was in the

next room, and then there was the whisper of soft robes, a breath of gentle perfume, and a snowy figure in the door. She was dressed for the evening.

"Maman?"

Madame Delphine was struggling desperately with the lamp, and at that moment it responded with a tiny bead of light.

"I am here, my daughter."

She hastened to the door, and Olive, all unaware of a third presence, lifted her white arms, laid them about her mother's neck, and, ignoring her effort to speak, wrested a fervent kiss from her lips. The crystal of the lamp sent out a faint gleam; it grew; it spread on every side; the ceiling, the walls lighted up; the crucifix, the furniture of the room came back into shape.

"Maman!" cried Olive, with a tremor of consternation.

"It is Miché Vignevielle, my daughter——"

The gloom melted swiftly away before the eyes of the startled maiden; a dark form stood out against the further wall; and the light, expanding to the full, shone clearly upon the unmoving figure and quiet face of Captain Lemaitre.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOTHER BIRD.

ONE afternoon, some three weeks after Captain Lemaitre had called on Madame Delphine, the priest started to make a pastoral call, and had hardly left the gate of his cottage when a person, overtaking him, plucked his gown.

"Père Jerome——"

He turned.

The face that met his was so changed with excitement and distress, that for an instant he did not recognise it.

"Why, Madame Delphine——"

"O Père Jerome! I wan' see you so bad, so bad! *Mo oulé dit quiç'ose*—I good some to tell you."

The two languages might be more successful than one, she seemed to think.

"We had better go back to my parlour," said the priest, in their native tongue.

They returned.

Madame Delphine's very step was altered —nervous and inelastic. She swung one arm as she walked, and brandished a turkey-tail fan.

"I was glad, yass, to kedge you," she said, as they mounted the front outdoor stair, following her speech with a slight unmusical laugh, and fanning herself with unconscious fury.

"*Fé chaud*," she remarked again, taking the chair he offered, and continuing to ply the fan.

Père Jerome laid his hat upon a chest of drawers, sat down opposite her, and said, as he wiped his kindly face—

"Well, Madame Carraze?"

Gentle as the tone was, she started, ceased fanning, lowered the fan to her knee, and commenced smoothing its feathers.

"Père Jerome——" She gnawed her lip and shook her head.

"Well?"

She burst into tears.

The priest rose and loosed the curtain of one of the windows. He did it slowly—as slowly as he could—and, as he came back, she lifted her face with sudden energy, and exclaimed—

"O Père Jerome, de law is brogue! de law is brogue! I brogue it! 'Twas me! 'Twas me!"

The tears gushed out again, but she shut her lips very tight, and dumbly turned away her face. Père Jerome waited a little before replying; then he said, very gently—

"I suppose dad muss 'ave been by accyden', Madame Delphine?"

The little father felt a wish—one which he often had when weeping women were before him—that he were an angel instead of a man, long enough to press the tearful cheek upon his breast, and assure the weeper God would not let the lawyers and judges hurt her. He allowed a few moments more to pass, and then asked—

"*N'est-ce-pas*, Madame Delphine? Daz ze way, ain't it?"

"No, Père Jerome, no. My daughter—O Père Jerome, I bethroath my lill' girl—to a w'ite man!" And immediately Madame Delphine commenced savagely drawing a thread in the fabric of her skirt with one trembling hand, while she drove the fan with the other. "Dey goin' git marry."

On the priest's face came a look of pained surprise. He slowly said—

"Is dad possib', Madame Delphine?"

"Yass," she replied, at first without lifting her eyes; and then again, "Yass," looking full upon him through her tears, "yass, 'tis tru'."

He rose and walked once across the room, returned, and said, in the Creole dialect—

"Is he a good man—without doubt?"

"De bez in God's world!" replied Madame Delphine, with a rapturous smile.

"My poor, dear friend," said the priest, "I am afraid you are being deceived by somebody."

There was the pride of an unswerving faith in the triumphant tone and smile with which she replied, raising and slowly shaking her head—

"Ah-h, no-o-o, Miché! Ah-h, no, no! Not by Ursin Lemaitre-Vignevielle!"

Père Jerome was confounded. He turned again, and, with his hands at his back and his eyes cast down, slowly paced the floor.

"He *is* a good man," he said by and by, as if he thought aloud. At length he halted before the woman.

"Madame Delphine——"

The distressed glance with which she had been following his steps was lifted to his eyes.

"Suppose dad should be true w'at doze peop' say 'bout Ursin."

"*Qui ci ça?* What is that?" asked the quadroone, stopping her fan.

"Some peop' say Ursin is crezzie."

"Ah, Père Jerome!" She leaped to her feet as if he had smitten her, and putting his words away with an outstretched arm and wide-open palm, suddenly lifted hands and eyes to heaven, and cried: "I wizh to God—*I wizh to God*—de whole worl' was crezzie dad same way!" She sank, trembling, into her chair. "Oh, no, no," she continued, shaking her head, "'tis not Miché Vignevielle w'at's crezzie." Her eyes lighted with sudden fierceness. "'Tis dad *law?* Dad *law* is crezzie! Dad law is a fool!"

A priest of less heart-wisdom might have replied that the law is—the law; but Père Jerome saw that Madame Delphine was expecting this very response. Wherefore he said, with gentleness—

"Madame Delphine, a priest is not a bailiff, but a physician. How can I help you?"

A grateful light shone a moment in her eyes, yet there remained a piteous hostility in the tone in which she demanded—

"*Mais, pou'quoi yê fi cette méchanique la?* What business had they to make that contraption?"

His answer was a shrug with his palms extended and a short, disclamatory "Ah." He started to resume his walk, but turned to her again and said—

"Why did they make that law? Well, they made it to keep the two races separate."

Madame Delphine startled the speaker with a loud, harsh, angry laugh. Fire came from her eyes and her lip curled with scorn.

"Then they made a lie, Père Jerome! Separate! No-o-o! They do not want to keep us separated; no, no! But they *do* want to keep us despised!" She laid her hand on her heart, and frowned upward with physical pain. "But, very well! from which race do they want to keep my daughter separate? She is seven parts white! The law did not stop her from being that; and now, when she wants to be a white man's good and honest wife, shall that law stop her? Oh no!" She rose up. "No;

I will tell you what that law is made for. It is made to—punish—my—child—for—not—choosing—her—father! Père Jerome—my God, what a law!" She dropped back into her seat. The tears came in a flood, which she made no attempt to restrain.

"No," she began again—and here she broke into English—"fo' me I don' kyare; but, Père Jerome,—'tis fo' dat I come to tell you,—dey *shall not* punizh my daughter!" She was on her feet again, smiting her heaving bosom with the fan. "She shall marrie oo she want!"

Père Jerome had heard her out, not interrupting by so much as a motion of the hand. Now his decision was made, and he touched her softly with the ends of his fingers.

"Madame Delphine, I want you to go at 'ome. Go at 'ome."

"Wad you goin' mague?" she asked.

"Nottin'. But go at 'ome. Kip quite; don' put you'se'f sig. I goin' see Ursin. We trah to figs dat law fo' you."

"You kin figs dad!" she cried, with a gleam of joy.

"We goin' to try, Madame Delphine. Adieu!"

He offered his hand. She seized and

kissed it thrice, covering it with tears, at the same time lifting up her eyes to his and murmuring—

"De bez man God evva mague!"

At the door she turned to offer a more conventional good-bye; but he was following her out, bareheaded. At the gate they paused an instant, and then parted with a simple adieu, she going home and he returning for his hat, and starting again upon his interrupted business.

Before he came back to his own house, he stopped at the lodgings of Monsieur Vignevielle, but did not find him in.

"Indeed," the servant at the door said, "he said he might not return for some days or weeks."

So Père Jerome, much wondering, made a second detour toward the residence of one of Monsieur Vignevielle's employés.

"Yes," said the clerk, "his instructions are to hold the business, as far as practicable, in suspense, during his absence. Everything is in another name." And then he whispered—

"Officers of the Government looking for him. Information got from some of the

prisoners taken months ago by the United States brig *Porpoise.* But"—a still softer whisper—"have no fear; they will never find him: Jean Thompson and Evariste Varrillat have hid him away too well for that."

CHAPTER XIII.

TRIBULATION.

THE Saturday following was a very beautiful day. In the morning a light fall of rain had passed across the town, and all the afternoon you could see signs, here and there upon the horizon, of other showers. The ground was dry again, while the breeze was cool and sweet, smelling of wet foliage, and bringing sunshine and shade in frequent and very pleasing alternation.

There was a walk in Pere Jerome's little garden, of which we have not spoken, off on the right side of the cottage, with his chamber window at one end, a few old and twisted, but blossom-laden, crape-myrtles on either hand, now and then a rose of some unpretending variety and some bunches of rue, and at the other end a shrine, in whose blue niche stood a small figure of Mary, with folded hands and uplifted eyes. No other window looked down upon the spot, and its

seclusion was often a great comfort to Père Jerome.

Up and down this walk, but a few steps in its entire length, the priest was walking, taking the air for a few moments after a prolonged sitting in the confessional. Penitents had been numerous this afternoon. He was thinking of Ursin.

The officers of the Government had not found him, nor had Père Jerome seen him; yet he believed they had, in a certain indirect way, devised a simple project by which they could at any time "figs dad law," providing only that these Government officials would give over their search; for, though he had not seen the fugitive, Madame Delphine had seen him, and had been the vehicle of communication between them. There was an orange-tree, where a mocking-bird was wont to sing, and a girl in white to walk, that the detectives wot not of. The law was to be "figs" by the departure of the three frequenters of the jasmine-scented garden in one ship to France, where the law offered no obstacles.

It seemed moderately certain to those in search of Monsieur Vignevielle (and it was true) that Jean and Evariste were his har-

bourers; but for all that the hunt, even for clues, was vain. The little banking establishment had not been disturbed. Jean Thompson had told the searchers certain facts about it, and about its gentle proprietor as well, that persuaded them to make no move against the concern, if the same revelations did not even induce a relaxation of their efforts for his personal discovery.

Père Jerome was walking to and fro, with his hands behind him, pondering these matters. He had paused a moment at the end of the walk furthest from his window, and was looking around upon the sky, when, turning, he beheld a closely-veiled female figure standing at the other end, and knew instantly that it was Olive.

She came forward quickly, and with evident eagerness.

"I came to confession," she said, breathing hurriedly, the excitement in her eyes shining through her veil, "but I find I am too late."

"There is no too late or too early for that; I am always ready," said the priest. "But how is your mother?"

"Ah!——"

Her voice failed.

"More trouble?"

"Ah, sir, I have *made* trouble. O Père Jerome, I am bringing so much trouble upon my poor mother?"

Père Jerome moved slowly toward the house, with his eyes cast down, the veiled girl at his side.

"It is not your fault," he presently said. And after another pause: "I thought it was all arranged."

He looked up and could see, even through the veil, her crimson blush.

"Oh no," she replied in a low, despairing voice, dropping her face.

"What is the difficulty?" asked the priest, stopping in the angle of the path, where it turned toward the front of the house.

She averted her face, and began picking the thin scales of bark from a crape-myrtle.

"Madame Thompson and her husband were at our house this morning. *He* had told Monsieur Thompson all about it. They were very kind to me at first, but they tried——" She was weeping.

"What did they try to do?" asked the priest.

"They tried to make me believe he is insane."

She succeeded in passing her handkerchief up under her veil.

"And I suppose then your poor mother grew angry, eh?"

"Yes; and they became much more so, and said if we did not write, or send a writing, to *him*, within twenty-four hours, breaking the——"

"Engagement," said Père Jerome.

"They would give him up to the Government. O Père Jerome, what shall I do? It is killing my mother!"

She bowed her head and sobbed.

"Where is your mother now?"

"She has gone to see Monsieur Jean Thompson. She says she has a plan that will match them all. I do not know what it is. I begged her not to go; but. O sir! she *is* crazy,—and—I am no better."

"My poor child," said Père Jerome, "what you seem to want is not absolution, but relief from persecution."

"O father, I have committed mortal sin —I am guilty of pride and anger."

"Nevertheless," said the priest, starting toward his front gate, "we will put off your confession. Let it go until to-morrow morning; you will find me in my box just

before mass; I will hear you then. My child, I know that in your heart, now, you begrudge the time it would take; and that is right. There are moments when we are not in place even on penitential knees. It is so with you now. We must find your mother. Go you at once to your house; if she is there, comfort her as best you can, and *keep her in, if possible*, until I come. If she is not there, stay; leave me to find her; one of you, at least, must be where I can get word to you promptly. God comfort and uphold you. I hope you may find her at home; tell her, for me, not to fear;" he lifted the gate-latch,—"that she and her daughter are of more value than many sparrows; that God's priest sends her that word from Him. Tell her to fix her trust in the great Husband of the Church, and she shall yet see her child receiving the grace-giving sacrament of matrimony. Go; I shall, in a few minutes, be on my way to Jean Thompson's, and shall find her, either there or wherever she is. Go; they shall not oppress you. Adieu!"

A moment or two later he was in the street himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

BY AN OATH.

PÈRE JEROME, pausing on a street-corner in the last hour of sunlight, had wiped his brow and taken his cane down from under his arm to start again, when somebody, coming noiselessly from he knew not where, asked, so suddenly as to startle him—

"*Miché, commin yé 'pellé la rie ici?*—how do they call this street here?"

It was by the bonnet and dress, disordered though they were, rather than by the haggard face which looked distractedly around, that he recognised the woman to whom he replied in her own *patois*—

"It is the Rue Burgundy. Where are you going, Madame Delphine?"

She almost leaped from the ground.

"O Père Jerome! *mo pas conné*,—I dunno. You know w'ere's dad 'ouse of Miché Jean Tomkin? *Mo courri 'ci, mo courri là,—mo pas capabe li trouvé.* I go

(run) here—there—I cannot find it." She gesticulated.

"I am going there myself," said he; "but why do you want to see Jean Thompson, Madame Delphine?"

"I '*blige*' to see 'im!" she replied, jerking herself half around, one foot planted forward with an air of excited preoccupation; "I god some' to tell 'im wad I '*blige*' to tell 'im!"

"Madame Delphine——"

"Oh! Père Jerome, fo' de love of de good God, show me dad way to de 'ouse of Jean Tomkin!"

Her distressed smile implored pardon for the rudeness.

"What are you going to tell him?" asked the priest.

"O Pere Jerome,"—in the Creole *patois* again,—"I am going to put an end to all this trouble—only I pray you do not ask me about it now; every minute is precious!"

He could not withstand her look of entreaty.

"Come," he said, and they went.

Jean Thompson and Doctor Varrillat lived opposite each other on the Bayou road, a

little way beyond the town limits as then prescribed. Each had his large, white-columned, four-sided house among the magnolias,— his huge live-oak overshadowing either corner of the darkly shaded garden, his broad, brick walk leading down to the tall, brick-pillared gate, his square of bright, red pavement on the turf-covered sidewalk, and his railed platform spanning the draining-ditch, with a pair of green benches, one on each edge, facing each other crosswise of the gutter. There, any sunset hour, you were sure to find the householder sitting beside his cool-robed matron, two or three slave-nurses in white turbans standing at hand and an excited throng of fair children, nearly all of a size.

Sometimes, at a beckon or call, the parents on one side of the way would join those on the other, and the children and nurses of both families would be given the liberty of the opposite platform and an ice-cream fund. Generally the parents chose the Thompson platform, its outlook being more toward the sunset.

Such happened to be the arrangement this afternoon. The two husbands sat on one bench and their wives on the other, both

pairs very quiet, waiting respectfully for the day to die, and exchanging only occasional comments on matters of light moment as they passed through the memory. During one term of silence Madame Varrillat, a pale, thin-faced, but cheerful-looking lady, touched Madame Thompson, a person of two and a half times her weight, on her extensive and snowy bare elbow, directing her attention obliquely up and across the road.

About a hundred yards distant, in the direction of the river, was a long, pleasantly shaded green strip of turf, destined in time for a sidewalk. It had a deep ditch on the nearer side, and a fence of rough cypress palisades on the further, and these were overhung, on the one hand, by a row of bitter-orange trees inside the enclosure, and, on the other, by a line of slanting china-trees along the outer edge of the ditch. Down this cool avenue two figures were approaching side by side. They had first attracted Madame Varrillat's notice by the bright play of sunbeams which, as they walked, fell upon them in soft, golden flashes through the chinks between the palisades.

Madame Thompson elevated a pair of glasses which were no detraction from her very good looks, and remarked, with the serenity of a reconnoitring general—

"*Père Jerome et cette malatraise.*"

All eyes were bent toward them.

"She walks like a man," said Madame Varrillat, in the language with which the conversation had opened.

"No," said the physician, "like a woman in a state of high nervous excitement."

Jean Thompson kept his eyes on the woman, and said—

"She must not forget to walk like a woman in the State of Louisiana,"—as near as the pun can be translated. The company laughed. Jean Thompson looked at his wife, whose applause he prized, and she answered by an asseverative toss of the head, leaning back, and contriving, with some effort, to get her arms folded. Her laugh was musical and low, but enough to make the folded arms shake gently up and down.

"Père Jerome is talking to her," said one. The priest was at that moment endeavouring, in the interest of peace, to say a good word for the four people who sat

watching his approach. It was in the old strain—

"Blame them one part, Madame Delphine, and their fathers, mothers, brothers, and fellow-citizens the other ninety-nine."

But to everything she had the one amiable answer which Père Jerome ignored—

"I am going to arrange it to satisfy everybody, all together. *Tout à fait.*"

"They are coming here," said Madame Varrillat, half articulately.

"Well, of course," murmured another, and the four rose up, smiling courteously, the doctor and attorney advancing and shaking hands with the priest.

No—Père Jerome thanked them—he could not sit down.

"This, I believe you know, Jean, is Madame Delphine——"

The quadroone courtesied.

"A friend of mine," he added, smiling kindly upon her, and turning, with something imperative in his eye, to the group. "She says she has an important private matter to communicate."

"To me?" asked Jean Thompson.

"To all of you; so I will——Good evening." He responded nothing to the expres-

sions of regret, but turned to Madame Delphine. She murmured something.

"Ah! yes, certainly." He addressed the company: "She wishes me to speak for her veracity; it is unimpeachable. Well, good evening." He shook hands and departed.

The four resumed their seats, and turned their eyes upon the standing figure.

"Have you something to say to us?" asked Jean Thompson, frowning at her law-defying bonnet.

"*Oui*," replied the woman, shrinking to one side, and laying hold of one of the benches; "*mo oulé di' tou' ç'ose*—I want to tell everything. *Miché Vignevielle la plis bon homme di moune*—the best man in the world; *mo pas capabe li fe tracas*—I cannot give him trouble. *Mo pas capabe' non; m'ole di' tous ç'ose.*" She attempted to fan herself, her face turned away from the attorney, and her eyes rested on the ground.

"Take a seat," said Doctor Varrillat, with some suddenness, starting from his place, and gently guiding her sinking form into the corner of the bench. The two ladies rose up; somebody had to stand; the two races could not both sit down at once—at least not in that public manner.

"Your salts," said the physician to his wife. She handed the vial. Madame Delphine stood up again.

"We will all go inside," said Madame Thompson; and they passed through the gate and up the walk, mounted the steps, and entered the deep, cool drawing-room.

Madame Thompson herself bade the quadroone be seated.

"Well?" said Jean Thompson, as the rest took chairs.

"*C'est drole*—it's funny," said Madame Delphine, with a piteous effort to smile, "that nobody thought of it. It is so plain. You have only to look and see. I mean about Olive." She loosed a button in the front of her dress and passed her hand into her bosom. "And yet, Olive herself never thought of it. She does not know a word."

The hand came out holding a miniature. Madame Varrillat passed it to Jean Thompson.

"*Ouala so popa*," said Madame Delphine. "That is her father."

It went from one to another, exciting admiration and murmured praise.

"She is the image of him," said Madame Thompson, in an austere undertone, returning it to her husband.

Doctor Varrillat was watching Madame Delphine. She was very pale. She had passed a trembling hand into a pocket of her skirt, and now drew out another picture, in a case, the counterpart of the first. He reached out for it, and she handed it to him. He looked at it for a moment, when his eyes suddenly lighted up, and he passed it to the attorney.

"*Et là*"—Madame Delphine's utterance failed—"*et là, voilà sa maman.*" (That is her mother.)

The three others instantly gathered around Jean Thompson's chair. They were much impressed.

"It is true beyond a doubt!" muttered Madame Thompson.

Madame Varrillat looked at her with astonishment.

"The proof is right there in the faces," said Madame Thompson.

"Yes! yes!" said Madame Delphine, excitedly; "the proof is there! You do not want any better! I am willing to swear to it! But you want no better proof! That is all anybody could want! My God! you cannot help but see it!"

Her manner was wild.

Jean Thompson looked at her sternly.

"Nevertheless, you say you are willing to take your solemn oath to this."

"Certainly——-"

"You will have to do it."

"Certainly, Miché Thompson, *of course* I shall; you will make out the paper and I will swear before God that it is true! Only" —turning to the ladies—"do not tell Olive; she will never believe it. It will break her heart! It——"

A servant came and spoke privately to Madame Thompson, who rose quickly and went to the hall. Madame Delphine continued, rising unconsciously –

"You see, I have had her with me from a baby. She knows no better. He brought her to me only two months old. Her mother had died in the ship, coming out here. He did not come straight from home here. His people never knew he was married!"

The speaker looked around suddenly with a startled glance. There was a noise of excited speaking in the hall.

"It is not true, Madame Thompson!" cried a girl's voice.

Madame Delphine's look became one of wildest distress and alarm, and she opened

her lips in a vain attempt to utter some request, when Olive appeared a moment in the door, and then flew into her arms.

"My mother! my mother! my mother!"

Madame Thompson, with tears in her eyes, tenderly drew them apart and let Madame Delphine down into her chair, while Olive threw herself upon her knees, continuing to cry—

"O my mother! Say you are my mother!"

Madame Delphine looked an instant into the upturned face, and then turned her own away with a long, low cry of pain, looked again, and laying both hands upon the suppliant's head, said—

"*O chère piti à moin, to pa' ma fie!*" (O my darling little one, you are not my daughter!) Her eyes closed, and her head sank back; the two gentlemen sprang to her assistance, and laid her upon a sofa unconscious.

When they brought her to herself, Olive was kneeling at her head, silently weeping.

"*Maman, chère maman!*" said the girl softly, kissing her lips.

"*Ma courri c'ez moin*" (I will go home), said the mother drearily.

"You will go home with me," said Madame Varrillat, with great kindness of manner—"just across the street here; I will take care of you till you feel better. And Olive will stay here, with Madame Thompson. You will be only the width of the street apart."

But Madame Delphine would go nowhere but to her home. Olive she would not allow to go with her. Then they wanted to send a servant or two to sleep in the house with her for aid and protection; but all she would accept was the transient service of a messenger to invite two of her kinspeople—man and wife—to come and make their dwelling with her.

In the course of time these two—a poor, timid, helpless pair—fell heir to the premises. Their children had it after them; but, whether in those hands or these, the house had its habits and continued in them; and to this day the neighbours, as has already been said, rightly explain its close-sealed, uninhabited look by the all-sufficient statement that the inmates "is quadroons."

CHAPTER XV.

KYRIE ELEISON.

THE second Saturday afternoon following was hot and calm. The lamp burning before the tabernacle in Père Jerome's little church might have hung with as motionless a flame in the window behind. The lilies of St. Joseph's wand, shining in one of the half-opened panes, were not more completely at rest than the leaves on tree and vine without, suspended in the slumbering air. Almost as still, down under the organ gallery, with a single band of light falling athwart his box from a small door which stood ajar, sat the little priest, behind the lattice of the confessional, silently wiping away the sweat that beaded on his brow and rolled down his face. At distant intervals the shadow of some one entering softly through the door would obscure, for a moment, the band of light, and an aged crone, or a little boy, or some gentle pre-

sence that the listening confessor had known only by the voice for many years, would kneel a few moments beside his waiting ear, in prayer for blessing and in review of those slips and errors which prove us all akin.

The day had been long and fatiguing. First, early mass; a hasty meal; then a business call upon the archbishop in the interest of some projected charity; then back to his cottage, and so to the banking-house of "Vignevielle," in the Rue Toulouse. There all was open, bright, and reassured, its master virtually, though not actually, present. The search was over, and the seekers gone, personally wiser than they would tell, and officially reporting that (to the best of their knowledge and belief, based on evidence, and especially on the assurances of an exceptional eye-witness, to wit, Monsieur Vignevielle, banker) Captain Lemaitre was dead and buried. At noon there had been a wedding in the little church. Its scenes lingered before Père Jerome's vision now—the kneeling pair: the bridegroom, rich in all the excellences of man, strength and kindness slumbering interlocked in every part and feature; the bride, a saintly weariness on her pale face,

her awesome eyes lifted in adoration upon the image of the Saviour: the small knots of friends behind: Madame Thompson, large, fair, self-contained; Jean Thompson, with the affidavit of Madame Delphine showing through his tightly buttoned coat: the physician and his wife, sharing one expression of amiable consent; and last—yet first—one small, shrinking female figure, here at one side, in faded robes and dingy bonnet. She sat as motionless as stone, yet wore a look of apprehension, and in the small restless black eyes which peered out from the pinched and wasted face betrayed the peacelessness of a harrowed mind; and neither the recollection of bride, nor of groom, nor of potential friends behind, nor the occupation of the present hour, could shut out from the tired priest the image of that woman, or the sound of his own low words of invitation to her, given as the company left the church—"Come to confession this afternoon."

By and by a long time passed without the approach of any step, or any glancing of light or shadow, save for the occasional progress from station to station of some one over on the right who was noiselessly going

the way of the cross. Yet Père Jerome tarried.

"She will surely come," he said to himself; "she promised she would come."

A moment later, his sense, quickened by the prolonged silence, caught a subtle evidence or two of approach, and the next moment a penitent knelt noiselessly at the window of his box, and the whisper came tremblingly, in the voice he had waited to hear—

"*Bénissez-moin, mo' père, pa'ce que mo péché.*" (Bless me, father, for I have sinned.)

He gave his blessing.

"*Ainsi soit-il*"—Amen, murmured the penitent, and then in the soft accents of the Creole *patois* continued—

"'I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, *through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.*' I confessed on Saturday three weeks ago and received absolution, and I have performed the penance enjoined. Since then——" There she stopped.

There was a soft stir, as if she sank slowly down, and another as if she rose up again, and in a moment she said—

"Olive *is* my child. The picture I showed to Jean Thompson is the half-sister of my daughter's father, dead before my child was born. She is the image of her and of him; but, O God! Thou knowest! O Olive, my own daughter!"

She ceased, and was still. Père Jerome waited, but no sound came. He looked through the window. She was kneeling, with her forehead resting on her arms—motionless.

He repeated the words of absolution. Still she did not stir.

"My daughter," he said, "go to thy home in peace." But she did not move.

He rose hastily, stepped from the box, raised her in his arms, and called her by name—

"Madame Delphine!" Her head fell back in his elbow; for an instant there was life in the eyes—it glimmered—it vanished, and tears gushed from his own and fell upon the gentle face of the dead, as he looked up to heaven and cried—

"Lord, lay not this sin to her charge!"

CARANCRO.

CHAPTER I.

SOSTHÈNE.

BAYOU TECHE is the dividing line. On its right is the land of bayous, lakes, and swamps ; on its left the beautiful short-turfed prairies of western Louisiana. The Vermillion river divides the vast prairie into the countries of Attakapas on the east and Opelousas on the west. On its west bank, at its head of navigation, lies the sorry little town of Vermillionville, near about which, on the north and east, the prairie rises and falls with a gentle swell, from whose crests one may, as from the top of a wave, somewhat overlook the surrounding regions.

Stand on whichever one you may, the prospect stretches away, fair and distant, in broad level or gently undulating expanses of crisp, compact turf, dotted at remote intervals by farms, each with its low-roofed house nestled in a planted grove of oaks, or, oftener, Pride of China trees. Far and near herds of

horses and cattle roam at will over the plain. If for a moment, as you pass from one point of view to another, the eye be shut in, it is only where in some lane you are walled in by fields of dense, tall sugar-cane or cotton, or by huge, green Chickasaw hedges, studded with their white-petalled, golden-centred roses. Eastward the plain breaks into slight ridges which, by comparison with the general level, are called hills; while toward the north it spreads away in quieter swells, with more frequent fields and larger houses.

North, south, east, and west, far beyond the circle of these horizons, not this parish of Lafayette only, but St. Landry, St. Martin, Iberia, St. Mary's, Vermillion,—all are the land of the Acadians. This quarter off here to northward was named by the Nova Scotian exiles, in memory of the land from which they were driven, the Beau Bassin. These small homestead groves that dot the plain far and wide are the homes of their children. Here is this one on a smooth, green billow of the land just without the town. It is not like the rest—a large brick house, its Greek porch half hid in a grove of oaks. On that dreadful day, more than a century ago, when the British in far-off Acadie shut into the

chapel the villagers of Grand Pré, a certain widow fled with her children to the woods, and there subsisted for ten days on roots and berries, until finally, the standing crops as well as the houses being destroyed, she was compelled to accept exile, and in time found her way, with others, to these prairies. Her son founded Vermillionville. Her grandson rose to power—sat in the Senate of the United States. From early manhood to hale grey age the people of his State were pleased to hold him, now in one capacity, now in another, in their honoured service; they made him Senator, Governor, President of Convention, what you will. I have seen the portrait for which he sat in early manhood to a noted English court painter: dark, waving locks; strong, well-chiselled features; fine, clear eyes; an air of warm, steady-glowing intellectual energy. It hangs still in the home of which I speak. And I have seen an old ambrotype of him taken in the days of this story: hair short-cropped, grey; eyes thoughtful, courageous; mouth firm, kind, and ready to smile.

It must have been some years before this picture was taken, that, as he issued from his stately porch,—which the oaks, young

then, did not hide from view as they do now, — coming forth to mount for his regular morning ride, a weary-faced woman stood before him, holding by the hand a little, toddling boy. She was sick; the child was hungry. He listened to her tale. Their conversation was in French.

"Widow, are you? And your husband was a Frenchman: yes, I see. Are you an Acadian? You haven't the accent."

"I am a Creole," she said, with a perceptible flush of resentment. So that he responded amiably—

"Yes; and, like all Creoles, proud of it, as you are right to be. But I am an Acadian of the Acadians, and never wished I was anything else."

He found her a haven a good half-day's ride out across the prairies westward, in the home of his long-time acquaintance, Sosthène Gradnego, who had no more heart than his wife had to say no to either their eminent friend or a houseless widow; and so, as to children, had so many already that one more was nothing. They did not feel the burden of her, she died so soon; but they soon found she had left with them a positive quantity in her little prattling, restless, high-tempered

Bonaventure. Bonaventure Deschamps; he was just two years younger than their own little Zoséphine.

Sosthène was already a man of some note in this region—a region named after a bird. Why would it not often be well so to name places—for the bird that most frequents the surrounding woods or fields? How pleasant to have one's hamlet called Nightingale, or Whip-poor-will, or Goldfinch, or Oriole! The home of Zoséphine and Bonaventure's childhood was in the district known as Carancro; in bluff English, Carrion Crow.

CHAPTER II.

BONAVENTURE AND ZOSÉPHINE.

THEY did not live *a la chapelle* : that is, in the village of six or eight houses clustered about the small wooden spire and cross of the mission chapel. Sosthène's small ground-story cottage, with garret stairs outside in front on the verandah and its five-acre farm behind, was not even on a highway nor on the edge of any rich *bas fond*—creek-bottom. It was *au large*—far out across the smooth, unscarred turf of the immense prairie, conveniently near one of the clear, circular ponds—*maraises*—which one sees of every size and in every direction on the seemingly level land. Here it sat, as still as a picture, within its hollow square of China trees, which every third year yielded their limbs for fuel ; as easy to overlook the first time—as easy to see the next time—as a bird sitting on her eggs. Only the practised eye could read aright

the infrequent obscure signs of previous travel that showed the way to it—sometimes no more than the occasional soilure of the short turf by a few wheels or hoofs where the route led into or across the *coolées* —rivulets—that from *marais* to *marais* slipped southward toward the great marshes of the distant, unseen gulf.

When I say the parent of one of these two children and guardian of the other was a man of note, I mean, for one thing, his house was painted. That he was the owner of thousands of cattle one need not mention, for so were others who were quite inconspicuous, living in unpainted houses, rarely seeing milk, never tasting butter; men who at call of their baptismal names would come forth from these houses barefooted and bareheaded in any weather, and, while their numerous progeny grouped themselves in the doorway one behind another in inverse order of age and stature, would either point out your lost way, or, quite as readily as Sosthène, ask you in beneath a roof where the coffee-pot never went dry or grew cold by day. Nor would it distinguish him from them to say he had many horses or was always well mounted. It was a land of

horsemen. One met them incessantly; men in broad hats and dull homespun, with thin, soft, untrimmed brown beards, astride of small but handsome animals, in Mexican saddles, the girths and bridles of plaited hair, sometimes a *pialle*, or *arriatte*—*lasso*—*lariat* of plaited raw-hide coiled at the saddle-bow. "Adieu, Onesime"—always adieu at meeting, the same as at parting. "Adieu, François; adieu, Christofle; adieu, Lazare;" and they with their gentle, brown-eyed, wild-animal gaze, "Adjieu."

What did make Sosthène notable was the quiet thing we call thrift, made graceful by certain rudiments of taste. To say Sosthène means Madame Sosthène as well; and this is how it was that Zoséphine Gradnego and Bonaventure Deschamps, though they went not to school, nevertheless had "advantages." For instance, the clean, hard-scrubbed cypress floors beneath their pattering feet; the neat round party-coloured mats at the doors that served them for towns and villages; the strips of home-woven carpet that stood for roads—this one to Mermentau, that one to Côte Gelée, a third *à la chapelle;* the walls of unpainted pine; the beaded joists under the ceiling; the home-made furniture;

bedsteads and wardrobes of stained woods, and hickory chairs with rawhide seats, hair uppermost; the white, fringed counterpanes on the high feather-beds; especially, in the principal room, the house's one mantelpiece, of wood showily stained in three colours and surmounted by a pair of gorgeous vases beneath which the two children used to stand and feast their eyes, worth fifty cents if they were worth one—these were as books to them in-doors; and out in the tiny garden, where they played wild horse and wild cow and lay in ambush for butterflies, they came under the spell of marigolds, prince's feathers, lady-slippers, immortelles, portulaca, jonquil, lavender, althæa, love-apples, sage, violets, amaryllis, and that grass ribbon they call *jarretière de la vierge*—the virgin's garter.

Time passed; the children grew. The children older than they in the same house became less and less like children, and began to disappear from the family board and roof by a mysterious process called marrying, which greatly mystified Zoséphine, but equally pleased her by the festive and jocund character of the occasions, times when there was a ravishing abun-

dance of fried rice cakes and *boulettes*—beef balls.

To Bonaventure these affairs brought less mystery and less unalloyed pleasure. He understood them better. Some boys are born lovers. From the time they can reach out from the nurse's arms they must be billing and cooing and choosing a mate. Such was ardent little Bonaventure; and none of the Gradnego weddings ever got quite through its ceremony without his big blue eyes being found full of tears—tears of mingled anger and desolation—because by some unpardonable oversight he and Zosephine were still left unmarried. So that the pretty damsel would have to take him aside and kiss him as they clasped, and promise him, "Next time—next time, without fail!"

Nevertheless he always reaped two proud delights from these events. For one, Sosthène always took him upon his lap and introduced him as his little Creole. And the other, the ex-governor came to these demonstrations—the great governor! who lifted him to his knee and told him of those wonderful things called cities, full of people that could read and write; and about steamboats and steam-cars.

At length one day, when weddings had now pretty well thinned out the ranks of Sosthène's family, the ex-governor made his appearance though no marriage was impending. Bonaventure, sitting on his knee, asked why he had come, and the ex-governor told him there was war.

"Do you not want to make haste and grow up and be a dragoon?"

The child was silent, and Sosthène laughed a little as he said privately in English, which tongue his exceptional thrift had put him in possession of—

"Aw, naw!"—he shook his head amusedly—"he dawn't like hoss. Go to put him on hoss, he kick like a frog. Yaas; squeal wuss 'n a pig. But still, sem time, you know, he ain't no coward; git mad in minute; fight like little ole ram. Dawn't ondstand dat little fellah; he love flower' like he was a gal."

"He ought to go to school," said the ex-governor. And Sosthène, half to himself, responded in a hopeless tone—

"Yaas." Neither Sosthène nor any of his children had ever done that.

CHAPTER III.

ATHANASIUS.

WAR it was. The horsemen grew scarce on the wide prairies of Opelousas. Far away in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, on bloody fields, many an Acadian volunteer and many a poor conscript fought and fell for a cause that was really none of theirs, simple, non-slave-holding peasants; and many died in camp and hospital—often of wounds, often of fevers, often of mere longing for home. Bonaventure and Zoséphine learned this much of war: that it was a state of affairs in which dear faces went away, and strange ones came back with tidings that brought bitter wailings from mothers and wives, and made *les vieux*—the old fathers—sit very silent. Three times over that was the way of it in Sosthène's house.

It was also a condition of things that somehow changed boys into men very young.

A great distance away, but still in sight south-westward across the prairie, a dot of dark green showed where dwelt a sister and brother-in-law of Sosthène's *vieille* — wife. There was not the same domestic excellence there as at Sosthène's; yet the dooryard was very populous with fowls, within the house was always heard the hard thump, thump of the loom or the loud moan of the spinning-wheel; and the children were many. The eldest was Athanase. Though but fifteen he was already stalwart, and showed that intelligent sympathy in the family cares that makes such offspring the mother's comfort and the father's hope. At that age he had done but one thing to diminish that comfort or that hope. One would have supposed an ambitious chap like him would have spent his first earnings, as other ambitious ones did, for a saddle; but 'Thanase Beausoleil had bought a fiddle.

He had hardly got it before he knew how to play it. Yet, to the father's most welcome surprise, he remained just as bold a rider and as skilful a thrower of the *arriatte* as ever. He came into great demand for the Saturday night balls. When the courier with a red kerchief on a wand came gallop-

ing round, the day before, from *île* to *île*,—for these descendants of a maritime race call their homestead groves islands,—to tell where the ball was to be, he would assert, if there was even a hope of it, that 'Thanase was to be the fiddler.

In this way 'Thanase and his pretty little *jarmaine*—first cousin—Zoséphine, now in her fourteenth year, grew to be well acquainted. For at thirteen, of course, she began to move in society, which meant to join in the contra-dance. 'Thanase did not dance with her, or with any one. She wondered why he did not; but many other girls had similar thoughts about themselves. He only played, his playing growing better and better, finer and finer, every time he was heard anew. As to the few other cavaliers, very willing were they to have it so. The music could not be too good, and if 'Thanase was already perceptibly a rival when hoisted up in a chair on top of a table, fiddle and bow in hand, "twisting," to borrow their own phrase—"twisting the ears of that little red beast and rubbing his abdomen with a stick," it was just as well not to urge him to come down into the lists upon the dancing-floor. But they found one

night, at length, that the music could be too good—when 'Thanase struck up something that was not a dance, and lads and damsels crowded around standing and listening and asking ever for more, and the ball turned out a failure because the concert was such a success.

The memory of that night was of course still vivid next day, Sunday, and Zoséphine's memory was as good as any one's. I wish you might have seen her in those days of the early bud. The time had returned when Sosthène could once more get all his household—so had marriages decimated it—into one vehicle, a thing he had not been able to do for almost these twenty years. Zoséphine and Bonaventure sat on a back seat contrived for them in the family *calèche*. In front were the broad-brimmed Campeachy hat of Sosthène and the meek, limp sunbonnet of *la vieille*. About the small figure of the daughter there was always something distinguishing, even if you rode up from behind, that told of youth, of mettle, of self-regard; a neatness of fit in the dress, a firm erectness in the little slim back, a faint proudness of neck, a glimpse of ribbon at the throat, another at the

waist; a something of assertion in the slight crispness of her homespun sunbonnet, and a ravishing glint of two sparks inside it as you got one glance within—no more. And as you rode on, if you were a young blade, you would be—as the soldier lads used to say—all curled up; but if you were an old moustache, you would smile inwardly and say to yourself, "She will have her way; she will make all winds blow in her chosen direction; she will please herself; she will be her own good luck and her own commander-in-chief, and, withal, nobody's misery or humiliation, unless you count the swain after swain that will sigh in vain." As for Bonaventure, sitting beside her, you could just see his bare feet limply pendulous under his wide palm-leaf hat. And yet he was a very real personage.

"Bonaventure," said Zoséphine,—this was as they were returning from church, the wide rawhide straps of their huge wooden two-wheeled vehicle creaking, as a new saddle would if a new saddle were as big as a house, —"Bonaventure, I wish you could learn how to dance. I am tired trying to teach you." (This and most of the unbroken English of this story stands for Acadian French.)

Bonaventure looked meek for a moment and then resentful as he said—

"'Thanase does not dance."

"'Thanase! Bah! What has 'Thanase to do with it? Who was even thinking of 'Thanase? Was he there last night? Ah yes! I just remember now he was. But even he could dance if he chose; while you —you can't learn! You vex me. 'Thanase! What do you always bring him up for? I wish you would have the kindness just not to remind me of him! Why does not some one tell him how he looks, hoisted up with his feet in our faces, scratching his fiddle? Now, the fiddle, Bonaventure — the fiddle would just suit you. Ah, if you could play!" But the boy's quick anger so flashed from his blue eyes that she checked herself, and with contemplative serenity added—

"Pity nobody else can play so well as that tiresome fellow. It was positively silly, the way some girls stood listening to him last night. I'd be ashamed, or, rather, too proud, to flatter such a high-headed care-for-nobody. I wish he wasn't my cousin!"

Bonaventure, still incensed, remarked with quiet intensity that he knew why she wished 'Thanase was not a cousin.

"It's no such a thing!" exclaimed Zoséphine, so forcibly that Madame Sosthène's sunbonnet turned around, and a murmur of admonition came from it. But the maiden was smiling and saying blithely to Bonaventure—

"Oh, you—you can't even guess well." She was about to say more, but suddenly hushed. Behind them a galloping horse drew near, softly pattering along the turfy road. As he came abreast, he dropped into a quiet trot.

The rider was a boyish yet manly figure in a new suit of grey home-made linsey, the pantaloons thrust into the tops of his sturdy russet boots, and the jacket ending underneath a broad leather belt that carried a heavy revolver in its holster at one hip. A Campeachy hat shaded his face and shoulders, and a pair of Mexican spurs tinkled their little steel bells against their huge five-spiked rowels on his heels. He scarcely sat in the saddle-tree—from hat to spurs you might have drawn a perpendicular line. It would have taken in shoulders, thighs, and all.

"Adjieu," said the young centaur; and Sosthène replied from the creaking calèche,

"Adjieu, 'Thanase," while the rider bestowed his rustic smile upon the group. Madame Sosthène's eyes met his, and her lips moved in an inaudible greeting; but the eyes of her little daughter were in her lap. Bonaventure's gaze was hostile. A word or two passed between uncle and nephew, including a remark and admission that the cattle thieves were getting worse than ever; and with a touch of the spur, the young horseman galloped on.

It seems enough to admit that Zoséphine's further remarks were silly without reporting them in full.

"Look at his back! What airs! If I had looked up, I should have laughed in his face!" etc. "Well," she concluded, after much such chirruping, "there's one comfort —he doesn't care a cent for me. If I should die to-morrow, he would forget to come to the funeral. And you think I wouldn't be glad? Well, you're mistaken, as usual. I hate him, and I just know he hates me; everybody hates me!"

The eyes of her worshipper turned upon her. But she only turned her own away across the great plain to the vast arching sky, and patted the calèche with a little

foot that ached for deliverance from its Sunday shoe. Then her glance returned, and all the rest of the way home she was as sweet as the last dip of cane-juice from the boiling battery.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSCRIPT OFFICER.

BY and by 'Thanase was sixteen. Eighteen was the lowest age for conscription, yet he was in the Confederate uniform. But then so was his uncle Sosthène ; so was his father. It signified merely that he had been received into the home guard. The times were sadly unsettled. Every horseman, and how much more every group of horsemen, that one saw coming across the prairie was watched by anxious eyes, from the moment they were visible specks, to see whether the uniform would turn out to be the blue or the grey. Which was the more unwelcome I shall not say, but this I can, that the blue meant invasion and the grey meant conscription. Sosthène was just beyond the limit of age, and 'Thanase two years below it, but 'Thanase's father kept a horse saddled all the time, and slept indoors only on stormy nights.

Do not be misled: he was neither deserter nor coward; else the nickname which had quite blotted out his real name would not have been Chaouache—savage, Indian. He was needed at home, and it was not his war. His war was against cattle-thieves and like marauders, and there was no other man in all Caranero whom these would not have had on their track rather than him. But one grey dawn they found there was another not unlike him. They had made an attempt upon Sosthène's cattle one night; had found themselves watched and discovered; had turned and fled westward half the night, and had then camped in the damp woods of a *bas fond*: when, just as day was breaking and they were looking to their saddles about to mount—there were seven of them—just then—listen!—a sound of hoofs!

Instantly every left foot is in stirrup, but before they can swing into the saddle a joyous cry is in their ears, and pop! pop! pop! pop! ring the revolvers as, with the glad, fierce cry still resounding, three horsemen launch in upon them—only three, but those three a whirlwind. See that riderless horse, and this one, and that one! And

now for it—three honest men against four remaining thieves! Pop! pop! dodge, and fire as you dodge! Pop! pop! pop! down he goes; well done, grey-bearded Sosthène! Shoot there! Wheel here! Wounded? Never mind—ora! Another rogue reels! Collar him, Chaouache! drag him from the saddle—down he goes! What, again! Shoot there! Look out, that fellow's getting away! Ah! down goes Sosthène's horse, breaking his strong neck in the tumble. Up, bleeding old man—bang! bang! Ha, ha, ora! that finishes—ora! 'Twas the boy saved your life with that last shot, Sosthène, and the boy—the youth is 'Thanase.

He has not stopped to talk; he and his father are catching the horses of the dead and dying jayhawkers. Now bind up Sosthène's head, and now 'Thanase's hip. Now strip the dead beasts and take the dead men's weapons, boots, and spurs. Lift this one moaning villain into his saddle and take him along, though he is going to die before ten miles are gone over. So they turn homeward, leaving high revel for the carrion-crows.

Think of Bonaventure, the slender, the

intense, the reticent—with 'Thanase limping on rude but glorious crutches for four consecutive Saturdays and Sundays up and down in full sight of Zosephine, saviour of her mother from widowhood, owner of two fine captured horses, and rewarded by Sosthène with five acres of virgin prairie. If the young fiddler's music was an attraction before, fancy its power now, when the musician had to be lifted to his chair on top of the table.

Bonaventure sought comfort of Zoséphine, and she gave it, tittering at 'Thanase behind his back, giving Bonaventure knowing looks, and sticking her sunbonnet in her mouth.

"Oh, if the bullet had only gone into the dandy's fiddle-bow arm!" she whispered gleefully.

"I wish he might never get well!" said the boy.

The girl's smile vanished; her eyes flashed lightning for an instant; the blood flew to her cheeks, and she bit her lip.

"Why don't you, now while he cannot help himself—why don't you go to him and hit him square in the face, like"— her arm flew up, and she smote him with her sunbonnet full between the eyes—"like that!"

She ran away, laughing joyously, while Bonaventure sat down and wept with rage and shame.

Day by day he went about his trivial tasks and efforts at pastime with the one great longing that Zoséphine would more kindly let him be her slave, and something —anything—take 'Thanase beyond reach.

Instead of this 'Thanase got well, and began to have a perceptible down on his cheek and upper lip, to the great amusement of Zoséphine.

"He had better take care," she said one day to Bonaventure, her eyes leaving their mirth and expanding with sudden seriousness, "or the conscript officer will be after him, though he is but sixteen."

Unlucky word. Bonaventure's bruised spirit seized upon the thought. They were on their way even then *à la chapelle;* and when they got there he knelt before Mary's shrine and offered the longest and most earnest prayer, thus far, of his life, and rose to his feet under a burden of guilt he had never known before.

It was November. The next day the wind came hurtling over the plains out of the north-west, bitter cold. The sky was

all one dark grey. At evening it was raining. Sosthène said, as he sat down to supper, that it was going to pour and blow all night. Chaouache said much the same thing to his wife as they lay down to rest. Further away from Caranero than many of Caranero's people had ever wandered, in the fire-lighted public room of a village tavern, twelve or fifteen men were tramping busily about, in muddy boots and big clanking spurs, looking to pistols and carbines of miscellaneous patterns, and securing them against weather under their as yet only damp and slightly bespattered great-coats, no two of which were alike. They spoke to each other sometimes in French, sometimes in English that betrayed a Creole rather than an Acadian accent. A young man with a neat *kepi* tipped on one side of his handsome head stood with his back to the fire, a sabre dangling to the floor from beneath a captured Federal overcoat. A larger man was telling him a good story. He listened smilingly, dropped the remnant of an exhausted cigarette to the floor, put his small, neatly booted foot upon it, drew from his bosom one of those silken tobacco-bags that our sisters in war-time used to

make for all the soldier boys, made a new cigarette, lighted it with the flint and tinder for which the Creole smokers have such a predilection, and put away his appliances, still hearkening to the story. He nodded his head in hearty approval as the tale was finished. It was the story of Sosthène, Chaouache, 'Thanase, and the jayhawkers. He gathered up his sabre and walked out, followed by the rest. A rattle of saddles, a splashing of hoofs, and then no sound was heard but the wind and the pouring rain. The short column went out of the village at full gallop.

Day was fully come when Chaouache rose and stepped out upon his galérie. He had thought he could venture to sleep in bed such a night; and, sure enough, here morning came and there had been no intrusion. 'Thanase, too, was up. It was raining and blowing still. Across the prairie, as far as the eye could reach, not a movement of human life could be seen. They went in again, made a fire of a few fagots and an armful of cotton-seed, hung the kettle, and emptied the old coffee from the coffee-pot.

The mother and children rose and dressed. The whole family huddled around the good,

hot, cotton-seed fire. No one looked out of window or door: in such wind and rain where was the need? In the little log stable hard by, the two favourite saddle-horses remained unsaddled and unbridled. The father's and son's pistol belts, with revolvers buttoned in their holsters, hung on the bedposts by the headboards of their beds. A long sporting rifle leaned in a corner near the chimney.

Chaouache and 'Thanase got very busy plaiting a horse-hair halter, and let time go by faster than they knew. Madame Chaouache, so to call her, prepared breakfast. The children played with the dog and cat. Thus it happened that still nobody looked out into the swirling rain. Why should they? Only to see the wide, deluged plain, the round, drenched groves, the *marais*es and sinuous *coolees* shining with their floods, and long lines of benumbed, wet cattle seeking in patient, silent Indian file for warmer pastures. They knew it all by heart.

Yonder furthest *île* is Sosthène's. The falling flood makes it almost undiscernible. Even if one looked, he would not see that a number of horsemen have come softly plashing up to Sosthène's front fence, for Sos-

thène's house and grove are themselves in the way. They spy Bonaventure. He is just going in upon the galérie with an armful of China-tree fagots. Through their guide and spokesman they utter, not the usual halloo, but a quieter hail, with a friendly beckon.

"Adjieu." The men were bedraggled, and so wet one could not make out the colour of the dress. One could hardly call it a uniform, and pretty certainly it was not blue.

"Adjieu," responded Bonaventure, with some alarm; but the spokesman smiled reassuringly. He pointed far away southwestward, and asked if a certain green spot glimmering faintly through the rain was not Chaouache's *île*, and Bonaventure, dumb in the sight of his prayer's answer, nodded.

"And how do you get there?" the man asks, still in Acadian French; for he knows the prairies well enough to be aware that one needs to know the road even to a place in full view across the plain. Bonaventure, with riot in his heart, and knowing he is drifting over the cataract of the sinfulest thing that ever in his young life he has had the chance to do, softly lays down his wood and comes to the corner of the galérie.

It is awful to him, even while he is doing it, the ease with which he does it. If, he says, they find it troublesome crossing the marshy place by Numa's farm,—*le platin à côte d'i' habitation à Numa*,—then it will be well to *virer de bord*—go about *et naviguer au large*—sail across the open prairie. "Adjieu." He takes up his fagots again and watches the spattering squad trot away in the storm, wondering why there is no storm in his own heart.

They are gone. Sosthene, inside the house, has heard nothing. The storm suffocates all sounds not its own, and the wind is the wrong way anyhow. Now they are far out in the open. Chaouache's *île* still glimmers to them far ahead in the distance, but if some one could only look from the front window of its dwelling, he would see them coming. And that would spoil the fun. So they get it into line with another man's grove nearer by, and under that cover quicken to a gallop. Away, away; splash, splash, through the *coolees*, around the *maraises*, clouds of wild-fowl that there is no time to shoot into rising now on this side now on that; snipe without number, grey as the sky, with flashes of white, trilling

petulantly as they flee ; giant snowy cranes lifting and floating away on waving pinions, and myriads of ducks in great eruptions of hurtling, whistling wings. On they gallop ; on they splash ; heads down ; water pouring from soaked hats and caps ; cold hands beating upon wet breasts ; horses throwing steaming muzzles down to their muddy knees and shaking the rain from their worried ears ; so on and on and on.

The horse-hair halter was nearly done. The breakfast was smoking on the board. The eyes of the family group were just turning toward it with glances of placid content, when a knock sounded on the door, and almost before father or son could rise or astonishment dart from eye to eye, the door swung open, and a man stood on the threshold, all mud and water and weapons, touching the side of his cap with the edge of his palm and asking in French, with an amused smile forcing its way about his lips—

"Can fifteen of us get something to eat, and feed our horses?"

Chaouache gave a vacant stare, and silently started toward the holsters that hung from the bedpost ; but the stranger's right hand flashed around to his own belt, and, with a repeater half drawn, he cried—

"Halt!" And then, more quietly. "Look out of the door, look out the window."

Father and son looked. The house was surrounded.

Chaouache turned upon his wife one look of silent despair. Wife and children threw themselves upon his neck, weeping and wailing. 'Thanase bore the sight a moment, maybe a full minute; then drew near, pressed the children with kind firmness aside, pushed between his father and mother, took her tenderly by the shoulders, and said in their antique dialect, with his own eyes brimming —

"Hush! hush! he will not have to go."

At a gentle trot the short column of horsemen moves again, but with its head the other way. The wind and rain buffet and pelt horse and rider from behind. Chaouache's door is still open. He stands in it with his red-eyed wife beside him and the children around them, all gazing mutely, with drooping heads and many a slow tear, after the departing cavalcade.

None of the horsemen look back. Why should they? To see a barefoot man beside a woman in dingy *volante* and *casaquin*, with two or three lads of ten or twelve in front, whose feet have known sunburn and frost

but never a shoe, and a damsel or two in cotton homespun dress made of one piece from collar to hem, and pantalettes of the same reaching to the ankles—all standing and looking the picture of witless incapacity, and making no plea against tyranny! Is that a thing worth while to turn and look back upon? If the blow fell upon ourselves or our set, that would be different; but these illiterate and lowly ones—they are—you don't know—so dull and insensible. Yes, it may be true that it is only *some* of them who feel less acutely than *some* of us—we admit that generously; but when you insinuate that when we overlook parental and fraternal anguish tearing at such hearts the dulness and insensibility are ours, you make those people extremely offensive to us, whereas you should not estrange them from our tolerance.

Ah, poor unpitied mother! go back to your toils; they are lightened now—a little; the cooking, the washing, the scrubbing. Spread, day by day, the smoking board, and call your spared husband and your little ones to partake; but you—your tears shall be your meat day and night, while underneath your breath you moan, "'Thanase! 'Thanase!"

CHAPTER V.

THE CURÉ OF CARANCRO.

IT was an unexpected and capital exchange. They had gone for a conscript, they came away with a volunteer.

Bonaventure sat by the fire in Sosthene's cottage, silent and heavy, holding his small knees in his knit hands and gazing into the flames. Zosephine was washing the household's few breakfast dishes. *La vieille*—the mother—was spinning cotton. *Le vieux*—Sosthene—sat sewing up a rent in a rawhide chair bottom. He paused by and by, stretched, and went to the window. His wife caught the same spirit of relaxation, stopped her wheel, looked at the boy moping in the chimney corner, and, passing over to his side, laid a hand upon his temple to see if he might have fever.

The lad's eyes did not respond to her; they were following Sosthène. The husband stood gazing out through the glass for a

moment, and then, without moving, swore a long, slow execration. The wife and daughter pressed quickly to his either side and looked forth.

There they came, the number increased to eighteen now, trotting leisurely through the subsiding storm. The wife asked what they were, but Sosthène made no reply ; he was counting them : twelve, thirteen, fourteen—fourteen with short guns, another one who seemed to wear a sword, and three, that must be—

"Cawnscreep," growled Sosthène, without turning his eyes. But the next moment an unusual sound at his elbow drew his glance upon Zoséphine. "*Diable!*" He glared at her weeping eyes, his manner demanding of her instant explanation. She retreated a step, moved her hand toward the approaching troop, and cried distressfully—

"*Tu va oére!*"—"You will see!"

His glance was drawn to Bonaventure. The lad had turned toward them, and was sitting upright, his blue eyes widened, his face pale, and his lips apart ; but ere Sosthène could speak his wife claimed his attention.

"Sosthène!" she exclaimed, pressing

against the window-pane.—"Ah, Sosthène! Ah, ah! they have got 'Thanase!"

Father, mother, and daughter crowded against the window and one another, watching the body of horse as it drew nigh. Bonaventure went slowly and lay face downward on the bed.

Now the dripping procession is at hand. They pass along the dooryard fence. At the little garden gate they halt. Only 'Thanase dismounts. The commander exchanges a smiling word or two with him, and the youth passes through the gate, and, while his companions throw each a tired leg over the pommel and sit watching him, comes up the short, flowery walk and in at the opening door.

There is nothing to explain, they have guessed it; he goes in his father's stead. There is but a moment for farewells.

"Adjieu, Bonaventure."

The prostrate boy does not move. 'Thanase strides up to the bed and looks at one burning cheek, then turns to his aunt.

"*Li malade?*"—"Is he ill?"

"*Sa l'air a ca,*" said the aunt. (*Il a l'air*—he seems so.)

"Bien, n'onc' Sosthène, adjieu." Uncle

and nephew shake hands stoutly. "Adjieu," says the young soldier again, to his aunt. She gives her hand and turns to hide a tear. The youth takes one step toward Zoséphine. She stands dry-eyed, smiling on her father. As the youth comes her eyes, without turning to him, fill. He puts out his hand. She lays her own on it. He gazes at her for a moment, with beseeching eye—"Adjieu." Her eyes meet his one instant—she leaps upon his neck—his strong arms press her to his bosom—her lifted face lights up—his kiss is on her lips—it was there just now, and now—'Thanase is gone and she has fled to an inner room.

Bonaventure stood in the middle of the floor. Why should the boy look so strange? Was it anger, or fever, or joy? He started out.

"*A ou-ce-tu va Bonaventure?*"—"Whereabouts are you going?"

"*Va crier les vaches.*"—"Going to call the cows."

"At this time of day?" demanded *la vieille*, still in the same tongue. "Are you crazy?"

"Oh!—no!" the boy replied, looking dazed. "No," he said; "I was going for

some more wood." He went out, passed the woodpile by, got round behind a corn crib, and stood in the cold, wet gale watching the distant company lessening on the view. It was but a short, dim, dark streak creeping across the field of vision like some slow insect on a window-glass. A spot just beyond it was a grove that would presently shut the creeping line finally from sight. They reached it, passed beyond, and disappeared; and then Bonaventure took off the small, soft-brimmed hat that hung about his eyes, and, safe from the sight and hearing of all his tiny world, lifted his voice, and with face kindling with delight swung the sorry covering about his head and cried three times—

"Ora! Or-r-ra! Ora-a-a-a!"

But away in the night Madame Sosthène, hearing an unwonted noise, went to Bonaventure's bedside and found him sobbing as if his heart had broken.

"He has had a bad dream," she said; for he would not say a word.

The curé of Carancro was a Creole gentleman who looked burly and hard when in meditation; but all that vanished when he spoke and smiled. In the pocket of his cas-

sock there was always a deck of cards, but that was only for the game of solitaire. You have your pipe or cigar, your flute or violoncello; he had his little table under the orange-tree and his game of solitaire.

He was much loved. To see him beyond earshot talking to other men you would say he was by nature a man of affairs, whereas, when you came to hear him speak you find him quite another sort: one of the Elisha kind, as against the Elijahs; a man of the domestic sympathies, whose influence on man was personal and familiar; one of the sort that heal bitter waters with a handful of salt, make poisonous pottage wholesome with a little meal, and find easy, quiet ways to deliver poor widows from their creditors with no loss to either; a man whom men reverenced, while women loved and children trusted him.

The ex-governor was fond of his company, although the curé only smiled at politics and turned the conversation back to family matters. He had a natural gift for divining men's, women's, children's personal wants, and every one's distinctively from every other one's. So that to everybody he was an actual personal friend.

He had been a long time at Carancro. It was he who buried Bonaventure's mother. He was the connecting-link between Bonaventure and the ex-governor. Whenever the curé met this man of worldly power there were questions asked and answered about the lad.

A little while after 'Thanase's enlistment the priest and the ex-governor, who, if I remember right, was home only transiently from camp, met on the court-house square of Vermillionville, and stood to chat a bit while others contemplated from across the deep, red mud of the street these two interesting representatives of sword and gown. Two such men standing at that time must naturally, one would say, have been talking of the strength of the defences around Richmond, or the Emperor Maximilian's operations in Mexico, or Kirby Smith's movements, hardly far enough away to make it seem comfortable. But in reality they were talking about 'Thanase.

"He cannot write," said the curé; "and if he could, no one at home could read his letters."

The ex-governor promised to look after him.

"And how," he asked, "does Sosthène's little orphan get on?"

The curé smiled. "He is well—physically. A queer, high-strung child; so old, yet so young. In some things he will be an infant as long as he lives; in others, he has been old from the cradle. He takes everything in as much earnest as a man of fifty. What is to become of him?"

"Oh, he will come out all right," said the ex-governor.

"That depends. Some children are born with fixed characters: you can tell almost from the start what they are going to be. Be they much or little, they are complete in themselves, and it makes comparatively little difference into what sort of a world you drop them."

"'Thanase, for instance," said the ex-governor.

"Yes, you might say 'Thanase; but never Bonaventure. He is the other type; just as marked and positive traits, but those traits not yet builded into character: a loose mass of building material, and the beauty or ugliness to which such a nature may arrive depends on who and what has the building of it into form. What he may turn out to be

at last will be no mere product of circumstances; he is too original for that. Oh, he 's a study! Another boy under the same circumstances might turn out entirely different; and yet it will make an immense difference how his experiences are allowed to combine with his nature." The speaker paused a moment, while Bonaventure's other friend stood smiling with interest; then the priest added, "He is just now struggling with his first great experience."

"What is that?"

"It belongs," replied the curé, smiling in his turn, "to the confidences of the confessional. But," he added, with a little anxious look, "I can tell you what it will do; it will either sweeten his whole nature more and more, or else make it more and more bitter, from this time forth. And that is no trifle to you or me; for whether for good or bad, in a large way or in a small way, he is going to make himself felt."

The ex-governor mused. "I 'm glad the little fellow has you for a friend, father. I 'll tell you; if Sosthène and his wife will part with him and you will take him to live with you, and mark you, not try too hard to make a priest of him, I will bear his expenses."

"I will do it," said the curé.

It required much ingenuity of argument to make the Gradnego pair see the matter in the desired light; but when the curé promised Sosthène that he would teach the lad to read and write, and then promised *la vieille* that Zoséphine should share this educational privilege with him, they let him go.

Zoséphine was not merely willing, but eager to see the arrangements made. She beckoned the boy aside and spoke to him alone.

"You must go, Bonaventure. You will go, will you not—when I ask you? Think how fine that will be—to be educated! For me, I cannot endure an uneducated person. But—ah! *ca sré vaillant, pour savoir lire.* [It will be bully to know how to read.] *Aié ya yaie!*"—she stretched her eyes and bit her lip with delight—"*C'est t'y qui, pour savoir écrire!* [That's fine to know how to write.] I will tell you a secret, dear Bonaventure. Any girl of sense is *bound* to think it much greater and finer for a man to read books than to ride horses. She may not want to, but she has to do it; she can't help herself!"

Still Bonaventure looked at her mournfully. She tried again.

"When I say any girl of sense I include myself—of course! I think more of a boy—or man, either—who can write letters than of one who can play the fiddle. There, now, I have told you! And when you have learned those things, I will be proud of you! And besides, you know, if you don't go, you make me lose my chance of learning the same things; but if you go, we will learn them together!"

He consented. She could not understand the expression of his face. She had expected gleams of delight. There were none. He went with silent docility and without a tear; but also without a smile. When in his new home the curé from time to time stole glances at his face fixed in unconscious reverie, it was full of a grim, unhappy satisfaction.

"Self is winning or dying hard. I wish no ill to 'Thanase; but if there is to be any bad news of him, I hope, for the sake of this boy's soul, it will come quickly." So spoke the curé alone, to his cards.

CHAPTER VI.

MISSING.

THE war was in its last throes even when 'Thanase enlisted. Weeks and months passed. Then a soldier coming home to Carancro—home-comers were growing plentiful—brought the first news of him. An officer making up a force of picked men for an expedition to carry important despatches eastward across the Mississippi and far away into Virginia had chosen 'Thanase. The evening the speaker left for home on his leave of absence 'Thanase was still in camp, but was to start the next morning. It was just after Sunday morning mass that Sosthène and Chaouache, with their families and friends, crowded around this bearer of tidings.

"Had 'Thanase been in any battles?"

"Yes, two or three."

"And had not been wounded?"

"No, although he was the bravest fellow in his company."

Sosthène and Chaouache looked at each other triumphantly, smiled, and swore two simultaneous oaths of admiration. Zoséphine softly pinched her mother, and whispered something. Madame Sosthène addressed the home-comer aloud—

"Did 'Thanase send no other message except that mere 'how-d'ye all do?'"

"No."

Zoséphine leaned upon her mother's shoulder and softly breathed—

"He is lying."

The mother looked around upon her daughter in astonishment. The flash of scorn was just disappearing from the girl's eyes. She gave a little smile and chuckle, and murmured, with her glance upon the man—

"He has no leave of absence. He is a deserter."

Then Madame Sosthène saw two things at once: that the guess was a good one, and that Zoséphine had bidden childhood a final "adjieu."

The daughter felt Bonaventure's eyes upon her. He was standing only a step or

two away. She gave him a quick, tender look that thrilled him from head to foot, then lifted her brows and made a grimace of pretended weariness. She was growing prettier almost from day to day.

And Bonaventure, he had no playmates—no comrades—no amusements. This one thing, which no one knew but the curé, had taken possession of him. The priest sometimes seemed to himself cruel, so well did it please him to observe the magnitude Bonaventure plainly attributed to the matter. The boy seemed almost physically to bow under the burden of his sense of guilt.

"It is quickening all his faculties," said the curé to himself. Zoséphine had hardly yet learned to read without stammering when Bonaventure was already devouring the few French works of the curé's small bookshelf. Silent on other subjects, on one he would talk till a pink spot glowed on either cheek-bone and his blue eyes shone like a hot noon sky ;—casuistry. He would debate the right and wrong of anything—everything, and the rights and wrongs of men in every relation of life.

Blessed was it for him then that the tactful curé was his father and mother in one, and

the surgeon and physician of his mind. Thus the struggle brought him light. To the boy's own eyes it seemed to be bringing him only darkness, but the priest saw better.

"That is but his shadow; he is standing in it; it is deepening; that shows the light is increasing." Thus spake the cure to himself as he sat at solitaire under his orange-tree one afternoon.

The boy passed out of sight, and the curé's eyes returned to his game of solitaire; but as he slowly laid one card upon another, now here, now there, he still thought of Bonaventure.

"There will be no peace for him, no sweetness of nature, no green pastures and still waters, within or without, while he seeks life's adjustments through definitions of mere right and rights. No, boy; you will ever be a restless captive pacing round and round those limits of your inclosure. Worse still if you seek those definitions only to justify your overriding another's happiness in pursuit of your own." The boy was not in hearing; this was apostrophe.

"Bonaventure," he said, as the boy came by again; and Bonaventure stopped. The

player pushed the cards from him, pile by pile, leaned back, ran his fingers slowly through his thin, grey hair, and smiled.

"Bonaventure, I have a riddle for you. It came to me as I was playing here just now. If everybody could do just as he pleased; if he had, as the governor would say, all his rights, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness—if everybody had this, I say, why would we still be unhappy?"

The boy was silent.

"Well, I did not suppose you would know. Would you like me to tell you? It is because happiness pursued is never overtaken. And can you guess why that is? Well, never mind, my son. But—would you like to do something for me?"

Bonaventure nodded. The curé rose, taking from his bosom as he left his chair a red silk handkerchief and a pocket-worn note-book. He laid the note-book on the table, and drawing back with a smile said—

"Here, sit down in my place and write what I tell you, while I stretch my legs. So; never mind whether you understand or not. I am saying it for myself: it helps *me* to understand it better. Now, as I walk you write. 'Happiness pursued is never

overtaken, because'—have you written that?—'because, little as we are, God's image makes us so large that we cannot live within ourselves, nor even for ourselves, and be satisfied.' Have you got that down? Very well—yes—the spelling could be improved, but that is no matter. Now wait a moment; let me walk some more. Now write: 'It is not good for man to be alone, because'—because—let me see; where—ah, yes!—'because rightly self is the'—Ah! no, no, my boy; not a capital S for 'self'—Ah! that's the very point—small s—'because rightly self is the smallest part of us. Even God found it good not to be alone, but to create'—got that?—'to create objects for His love and benevolence.' Yes—'And because in my poor, small way I am made like Him, the whole world becomes a part of me'—small m, yes, that is right!" From bending a moment over the writer the priest straightened up and took a step backward. The boy lifted his glance to where the sunlight and leaf-shadows were playing on his guardian's face. The curé answered with a warm smile, saying—

"My boy, God is a very practical God—no, you need not write it; just listen a

moment. Yes; and so when He gave us natures like His, He gave men not wives only, but brethren and sisters and companions and strangers, in order that benevolence, yes, and even self-sacrifice,—mistakenly so called,—might have no lack of direction and occupation, and then bound the whole human family together by putting every one's happiness into some other one's hands. I see you do not understand: never mind; it will come to you little by little. It was a long time coming to me. Let us go in to supper."

The good man had little hope of such words taking hold. At school next day there was Zoséphine with her soft electric glances to make the boy forget all; and at the Saturday night balls there she was again.

"Bonaventure," her manner plainly said, "did you ever see anything else in this wide world so tiresome as these boys about here? Stay with me; it keeps them away." She never put such thoughts into words. With an Acadian girl such a thing was impossible. But girls do not need words. She drew as potently, and to all appearances as impassively, as a lodestone. All others than

Bonaventure she repelled. If now and then she toyed with a heart, it was but to see her image in it once or twice and toss it aside. All got one treatment in the main. Any one of them might gallop by her father's verandah seven times a day, but not once in all the seven would she be seen at the window glancing up at the weather or down at her flowers; nor on the verandah hanging up fresh hanks of yarn, nor at the well with the drinking-pail, getting fresh water, as she might so easily have been, had she so chosen. Yonder was Sosthène hoeing leisurely in the little garden, and possibly the sunbonnet of *la vieille* half seen and half hidden among her lima beans; but for the rest there was only the house, silent at best, or, worse, sending out through its half-open door the long, scornful No o-o! of the maiden's unseen spinning-wheel. No matter the fame or grace of the rider. All in vain, my lad: pirouette as you will; sit your gallantest; let your hat blow off, and turn back and at full speed lean down from the saddle and snatch it airily from the ground, and turn again and gallop away; all is in vain. For by her estimate either you are living in fear of the conscript

officer; or, if you are in the service, and here only transiently on leave of absence, your stay seems long, and it is rumoured your leave has expired; or, worse, you cannot read; or, worst, your age, for all your manly airs, is so near Zoséphine's as to give your attentions strong savour of presumption. But let any fortune bring Bonaventure in any guise—sorriest horseman of all, youngest, slenderest, and stranger to all the ways that youth loves—and at once she is visible; nay, more, accessible; and he, welcome. So accessible she, so welcome he, that more than once she has to waft aside her mother's criticisms by pleading Bonaventure's foster-brotherhood and her one or two superior years.

"Poor 'Thanase!" said the youths and maidens.

And now the war came to an end. Bonaventure was glad. 'Thanase was expected home, but—let him come. If the absent soldier knew what the young folks at the balls knew, he would not make haste in his return. And he did not, as it seemed. Day after day, in group after group, without shouting and without banners, with wounds and scars and tattered garments, some on

horses, but many more on foot, the loved ones—the spared ones, remnants of this command and that command and 'Thanase's command—came home. But day by day brought no 'Thanase.

Bonaventure began to wish for him anxiously. He wanted him back so that this load might be lifted. Thus the bitter would pass out of the sweet; the haunting fear of evil tidings from the absent rival would haunt no more. Life would be what it was to other lads, and Zoséphine one day fall to his share by a better title than he could ever make with 'Thanase in exile. Come, 'Thanase, come, come!

More weeks passed. The youth's returned comrades were all back at their ploughs again and among their herds. 'Thanase would be along by and by, they said; he could not come with them for he had not been paroled with them; he had been missing—taken prisoner, no doubt—in the very last fight. But presently they who had been prisoners were home also; and still 'Thanase had not come. And then, instead of 'Thanase coming, Chaouache died.

A terror took up its home in the heart of Bonaventure. Everything he looked upon,

every creature that looked upon him, seemed to offer an unuttered accusation. Least of all could he bear the glance of Zoséphine. He did not have to bear it. She kept at home now closely. She had learned to read, and Sosthène and his *vieille* had pronounced her education completed.

In one direction only could the eyes of Bonaventure go and meet nothing that accused him: that was into the face of the curé. And lest accusation should spring up there, he had omitted his confession for weeks. He was still child enough not to see that the priest was watching him narrowly and tenderly.

One night, away in the small hours, the curé was aroused by the presence of some one in his room.

"Who is that?" He rose from his pillow.

"It is I, father," said a low voice, and against the darkness of an inner door he saw dimly the small, long night-dress of the boy he loved.

"What gets you up, Bonaventure? Come here. What troubles you?"

"I cannot sleep," murmured the lad, noiselessly moving near. The priest stroked the lad's brow.

"Have you not been asleep at all?"

"Yes."

"But you have had bad dreams that woke you?"

"Only one."

"And what was that?"

There was a silence.

"Did you dream about—'Thanase, for example?"

"Yes."

The priest reached out and took the boy's small, slender hands in his. They were moist and cold.

"And did you dream——"

"I dreamed he was dead. I dream it every night."

"But, my child, that does not make it so. Would you like to get into bed here with me? No?—or to go back now to your own bed? No? What, then?"

"I do not want to go back to bed any more. I want to go and find 'Thanase."

"Why, my child, you are not thoroughly awake, are you?"

"Yes, I want to go and find 'Thanase. I have been thinking to-night of all you have told me—of all you said that day in the garden,—and—I want to go and find 'Thanase."

"My boy," said the priest, drawing the lad with gentle force to his bosom, "my little old man, does this mean that you have come to the end of all self-service?—that self is never going to be spelt with a capital S any more? Will it be that way if I let you go?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, my son—God only knows whether I am wise or foolish, but—you may go."

The boy smiled for the first time in weeks, then climbed half upon the bed, buried his face in the priest's bosom, and sobbed as though his heart had broken.

"It has broken," said the curé to himself as he clasped him tightly. "It has broken—thank God."

CHAPTER VII.

A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK.

IN such and such a battle, in the last charge across a certain cornfield, or in the hurried falling back through a certain wood, with the murderous lead singing and hitting from yonder dark mass descending on the flank, and the air full of imperious calls—"halt!"—"surrender!" a man disappeared. He was not with those who escaped, nor with the dead, when they were buried, nor among the wounded anywhere, nor in any group of prisoners. But long after the war was over, another man, swinging a bush scythe among the overgrown corners of a worm fence, found the poor remnant of him, put it scarcely underground, and that was the end. How many times that happened!

Was it so with 'Thanase? No. For Sosthène's sake the ex-governor had taken much pains to correspond with officials concern-

ing the missing youth, and had secured some slender reassurances. 'Thanase, though captured, had not been taken to prison. Tidings of general surrender had overhauled him on the way to it, near, I think, the city of Baltimore — somewhere in that region, at any rate ; and he had been paroled and liberated, and had started, penniless and on foot, southwestward along the railway tracks.

To find him Bonaventure must set out, like him on foot, eastward over some fifty miles of wagon-road to the nearest railway ; eastward again over its cross-ties eighty miles to *la ville*, the great New Orleans, there to cross the Mississippi. Then away northward, through the deep, trestled swamps, leagues and leagues across Bayou La Branche and Bayou Desair, and Pass Manchac and North Manchac, and Pontchatoula River two or three times ; and out of the swamps and pine barrens into the sweet pine hills, with their great resinous boles rising one hundred—two hundred feet overhead, over meadows and fields and many and many a beautiful clear creek, and ten or more times over the winding Tangipahoa, by narrow clearings, and the old tracks of forgotten hurricanes, and many a wide plan-

tation; until more than two hundred miles from the great city, still northward across the sinking and swelling fields, the low, dark dome of another State's capital must rise amid spires and trees into the blue, and the green ruins of fortifications be passed, and the iron roads be found branching west, north, and east.

Thence all was one wide sea of improbability. Even before a quarter of that distance should have been covered, how many chances of every sort there were against the success of such a search.

"It is impossible that he should find him," said the ex-governor.

"Well,"—the curé shrugged,—"if he finds no one, yet he may succeed in losing himself." But in order that Bonaventure in losing himself should not be lost, the priest gave him pens and paper and took his promise to write back as he went step by step out into the world.

"And learn English, my boy; learn it with all speed; you will find it vastly, no telling how vastly, to your interest—I should say your usefulness. I am sorry I could not teach it to you myself. Here is a little spelling-book and reader for you to commence

with. Make haste to know English; in America we should be Americans; would that I could say it to all our Acadian people; but I say it to you; learn English. It may be that by not knowing it you may fail, or by knowing it succeed in this errand. And every step of your way let your first business be the welfare of others. Hundreds will laugh at you for it; never mind; it will bring you through. Yes, I will tell Sosthène and the others good-bye for you. I will tell them you had a dream that compelled you to go at once. Adieu." And just as the rising sun's first beam smote the curé's brimming eyes, his "little old man" turned his face toward a new life and set forward to enter it.

"Have you seen anywhere, coming back from the war, a young man named 'Thanase Beausoleil?"— This question to every one met, day in, day out, in early morning lights, in noonday heats, under sunset glows, by a light figure in thin, clean clothing, dusty shoes, and with limp straw hat lowered from the head. By and by, as first the land of the Acadians and then the land of the Creoles was left behind, a man every now and then would smile and shake his

head to mean he did not understand—for the question was in French. But then, very soon it began to be in English too, and by and by not in French at all.

"Sir, have you seen anywhere, coming back from the war, a young man named 'Thanase Beausoleil?"

But no one had seen him.

Travel was very slow. Not only because it was done afoot. Many a day he had to tarry to earn bread; for he asked no alms. But after a while he passed eastward into a third State, and at length into the mountains of a fourth.

Meantime the weeks were lengthening into months; the year was in its decline. Might not 'Thanase be even then at home? No. Every week Bonaventure wrote back, "Has he come?" and the answer came back, "He is not here."

But one evening, as he paced the cross-ties of a railway that hugged a huge forest-clad mountain-side, with the valley a thousand feet below, its stony river shining like a silken fabric in the sunset lights, the great hillsides clad in crimson, green, and gold, and the long, trailing smoke of the last train—a rare, motionless blue gauze—gone

to rest in the chill mid-air, he met a man who suddenly descended upon the track in front of him from higher up the mountain, —a great, lank mountaineer. And when Bonaventure asked the apparition the untiring question to which so many hundreds had answered no, the tall man looked down upon the questioner, a bright smile suddenly lighting up the unlovely chin-whiskered face, and asked—

"Makes a fiddle thess talk an' cry?"

"Yes."

"Well, he hain't been gone from hyer two weeks."

It was true. Only a few weeks before, gaunt, foot-sore, and ragged, tramping the cross-ties yonder where the railway comes from the eastward, curving into view out of that deep, green, and grey defile, 'Thanase had come into this valley. So short a time before, because almost on his start homeward illness had halted him by the way and held him long in arrest. But at length he had reached the valley and had lingered here for days; for it happened that a man in bought clothing was there just then, roaming around and hammering pieces off the rocks, who gave 'Thanase the chance to

earn a little something from him, with which the hard-marched wanderer might take the train instead of the cross-ties for as far as the pittance would carry him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUEST ENDED.

THE next sunrise saw Bonaventure, with a new energy in his step, journeying back the way he had come. And so anew the weeks wore by. Once more the streams ran southward, and the landscapes opened wide and fertile.

"Sir,—pardon your stopping,—in what State should I find myself at the present?"

The person inquired of looked blank, examined the questioner from head to foot, and replied—

"In what—oh! I understand; yes. What State—Alabama, yes, Alabama. You must excuse me, I didn't understand you at first. Yes, this is Alabama."

"Thank you, sir. Have you seen anywhere, coming back from the war, a young man named 'Thanase Beausoleil?"

"Back from the war! Why, everybody

done got back from the war long ago." "Lawng ago-o-o," the speaker pronounced it, but the pronunciation could not be as untrue as the careless assertion.

A second time, and again a third, Bonaventure fell upon the trail. But each time it was colder than before. And yet he was pushing on as fast as he dared. Many a kind man's invitation to tarry and rest was gratefully declined. Once, where two railways parted, one leading south, the other west, he followed the southern for days and then came back to the point of separation, and by and by found the lost thread again on the more westward road. But the time since Thanase had passed was the longest yet. Was it certainly Thanase? Yes; the fiddle always settled that question. And had he not got home? He had not come. Somewhere in the long stretch between Bonaventure and Carancro there must be strange tidings.

On the first New Year's eve after the war, as the sun was sinking upon the year's end, Bonaventure turned that last long curve of the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad, through the rushes, flags, willows, and cypress-stumps of the

cleared swamp behind the city of the Creoles, and passing around the poor shed called the depot, paused at the intersection of Calliope and Magnolia Streets, waiting the turn of chance.

Trace of the lost 'Thanase had brought him at length to this point. The word of a fellow-tramp, pledged on the honour of his guild, gave assurance that thus far the wanted man had come in strength and hope —but more than a month before.

The necessity of moving on presently carried Bonaventure aimlessly into the city along the banks of the New Canal. The lad had shot up in these few months into the full stature, without the breadth, of manhood. The first soft, uneven curls of a light-brown beard were on his thin cheek and chin. Patient weariness and humble perseverance were in his eyes. His coarse, ill-matched attire was whole, and, but for the soilure of foot-travel, clean. Companioning with nature had browned his skin and dried his straight, fine hair. Any reader of faces would have seen the lines of unselfish purpose about his lips, and when they parted nervously for speech, the earnest glow of that purpose in a counten-

ance that neither smiled nor frowned, and though it was shaded, cast no shadow.

The police very soon knew him. They smiled at one another and tapped the forehead with one finger as he turned away with his question answered by a shake of the head. It became their habit. They would jerk a thumb over a shoulder after him facetiously.

"Goes to see every unknown white man found dead or drowned. And yet, you know, he 's happy. He 's a heap sight"—sometimes they used other adjectives—"a heap sight happier than us, with his trampin' around all day and his French and English books at night, as old Tony says. He bunks with old Tony, you know, what keeps that little grocery in Solidelle Street. Tony says his candles comes to more than his bread and meat, or, rather, his rice and crawfish. He 's the funniest crazy *I* ever see. All the crazies I ever see is got some grind for pleasing number one; but this chap is everlastin'ly a-lookin' out for everybody *but* number one. Oh yes, the candles and books,—I reckon they are for number one,—that 's so; but anyhow, that 's what I hear Madame Tony allow."

The short, wet winter passed. The search stretched on into the spring. It did not, by far, take up the seeker's whole daily life. Only it was a thread that ran all through it, a dye that coloured it. Many other factors —observations, occupations, experiences— were helping to make up that life, and to make it, with all its pathetic slenderness, far more than it was likely ever to have been made at Carancro. Through hundreds of miles of tramping the lad had seen, in a singularly complete yet inhostile disentanglement from it, the world of men; glimpses of the rich man's world with its strivings, steadier views of the poor man's world with its struggles. The times were strong and rude. Every step of his way had been through a land whose whole civil order had been condemned, shattered, and cast into the mill of revolution for a total remoulding. Every day came like the discharge of a great double-shotted gun. It could not but be that, humble as his walk was, and his years so few, his fevered mind should leap into the questions of the hour like a naked boy into the surf. He made mistakes, sometimes in a childish, sometimes in an older way, some against most

worthy things. But withal he managed to keep the main direction of truth, after his own young way of thinking and telling it. He had no such power to formulate his large conclusions as you or even I have, but whatever wrought to enlighten the unlettered, whatever cherished manhood's rights alike in lofty and lowly, whatever worked the betterment of the poor, whatever made man not too much and not too little his brother's keeper,—his keeper not by mastery, but by fraternal service,—whatever did these things was to him good religion, good politics. So, at least, the curé told the ex-governor, as from time to time they talked of the absent Bonaventure and of his letters. However, they had to admit one thing: all this did not find 'Thanase.

And why, now, should 'Thanase longer be sought? Was there anything to gain by finding him dead? Not for Bonaventure; he felt, as plainly as though he had seen an angel write the decree, that to Bonaventure Deschamps no kind of profit or advantage under the sun must come by such a way. But was there anything to be gained in finding that 'Thanase still lived? The police

will tell you, as they told Bonaventure, that in these days of steam and steel and yoked lightning a man may get lost and be found again; but that when he stays lost, and is neither dead nor mad, it is because he wants to be lost. So where was to be the gain in finding 'Thanase alive? Oh, much, indeed, to Bonaventure! The star of a new hope shot up into his starless sky when that thought came, and in that star trembled that which he had not all these weary months of search dared see even with fancy's eye,—the image of Zoséphine! This—this! that he had never set out to achieve—this! if he could but stand face to face with evidence that 'Thanase could have reached home and would not.

This thought was making new lines in the young care-struck face, when——

"See here," said a voice one day. Bonaventure's sleeve was caught by the thumb and forefinger of a man to whom, in passing, he had touched his hat. The speaker was a police captain.

"Come with me." They turned and walked, Bonaventure saying not a word. They passed a corner, turned to the right, passed two more, turned to the left,—high brick walls on either side, damp, ill-smelling

pavements under foot,—and still strode on in silence. As they turned once more to the right in a dim, narrow way, the captain patted the youth softly on the back, and said—

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies."

So Bonaventure asked none. But presently, in one of those dens called sailors' boarding-houses, somewhere down on the water-front near the mint, he was brought face to face with a stranger whose manner seemed to offer the reverse proposition. Of him the youth asked questions and got answers.

'Thanase Beausoleil still lived, far beyond seas. How? why? If this man spake truly, because here in New Orleans, at the last turn in the long, weary journey that was to have brought the young volunteer home, he had asked and got the aid of this informant to ship—before the mast—for foreign parts. But why? Because his ambition and pride, explained the informant, had outgrown Carancro, and his heart had tired of the diminished memory of the little Zoséphine.

Bonaventure hurried away. What storms buffeted one another in his bosom!

Night had fallen upon the great city. Long stretches of street lay now between high walls and now between low-hanging eaves, empty of human feet and rife with solitude. Through long distances he could run and leap and make soft, mild pretence of shouting and smiting hands. The quest was ended! rivalry gone of its own choice, guilt washed from the hands, love returned to the nest! Zoséphine! Zoséphine! Away, now, away to the reward of penance, patience, and loyalty! Unsought, unhoped-for reward! As he ran, the crescent moon ran before him in the sky, and one glowing star, dipping low, beckoned him into the west.

And yet that night a great riot broke out in his heart; and in the morning there was a look on his face as though in that tumult conscience had been drugged, beaten, stoned, and left for dead outside the gate of his soul.

There was something of defiance in his eye, not good to see, as he started down the track of the old Opelousas railroad, with the city and the Mississippi at his back. When he had sent a letter ahead of him, he had no money left to pay for railway passage.

Should he delay for that or aught else, he might never start; for already the ghost of conscience was whispering in at the barred windows of his heart.

"It is not true. The man has told you falsely. It is not true."

And so he was tramping once more toward Caranero. And never before with such determined eagerness. Nothing could turn him about now. Once a train came in sight in front of him just as he had started across a trestle-work; but he ran forward across the open ties and leaped clear of the track on the further side, just when another instant would have been too late. He stood a moment, only half pausing among the palmettoes and rushes as the hurtling mass thundered by; then pushed quickly into the whirling dust of the track and hurried on between the clinking rails, not knowing that yonder dark, dwindling speck behind was bearing away from him strange tidings from the curé.

The summer was coming on; the suns were hot. There were leagues on leagues of unbroken, shaking prairie with never a handbreadth of shade, but only the glowing upper blue, with huge dazzling clouds mov-

ing, like herds of white elephants pasturing across heavenly fields, too slowly for the eye to note their motion; and below, the far-reaching, tremulous sheen of reed and bulrush, the wet lair of serpent, wild-cat, and alligator. Now and then there was the cool blue of sunny, wind-swept waters winding hither and thither toward the sea, and sometimes miles of deep forest swamp through which the railroad went by broad, frowzy, treeless clearings flanked with impassable oozy ditches; but shade there was none.

Nor was there peace. Always as he strode along, something he could not outgo was at his side, gaunt, wounded, soiled, whispering: "Turn back: turn back and settle with me," and ever put off with promises—after that fashion as old as the world—to do no end of good things if only the one right thing might be left undone.

And so because there were no shade, no peace, and no turning back, no one day's march made him stronger for the next; and at length, when he came to the low thatch of a negro cabin, under the shadow of its bananas he sank down in its doorway, red with fever.

There he had to stay many days; but in the end he was up and on his way again. He left the Atchafalaya behind him. It was easier going now. There was shade. Under his trudging feet was the wagon-road along the farther levee of the Teche. Above him great live oaks stretched their arms clad in green vestments and grey drapings, the bright sugar-cane fields were on his left, and on his right the beautiful winding bayou. In his face, not joy, only pallid eagerness, desire fixed upon fulfilment, and knowledge that happiness was something else; a young worn face with hard lines about the mouth and neck; the face of one who had thought self to be dead and buried, and had seen it rise to life again, and fallen captive to it. So he was drawing near to Carancro. Make haste, Bonaventure.

IX.

THE WEDDING.

A HORSE and buggy have this moment been stopped and are standing on a faint rise of ground seven miles out beyond the south-western outskirt of Carancro. The two male occupants of the vehicle are lifting their heads and looking with well-pleased faces at something out over the plain. You know the curé?—and the ex-governor.

In the far distance, across the vast level, something that looks hardly so large on the plain as an ant on the floor is moving this way across it. This is what the curé and his friend are watching. Open in the curé's hand, as if he had just read it aloud again, is that last letter of Bonaventure's, sent ahead of him from New Orleans and received some days ago. The governor holds the reins.

What do they see? Some traveller afoot? Can it be that Bonaventure is in sight?

That is not even the direction from which Bonaventure, when he comes, will appear. No, speck though it is, the object they are looking at is far larger than a man afoot, or any horse, or horse and calèche. It is a house. It is on wheels, and is drawn by many yoke of oxen. From what the curé is saying we gather that Sosthène has bought this very small dwelling from a neighbour, and is moving it to land of his own. Two great beams have been drawn under the sills at each end, the running gear of two heavy ox-wagons is made to bear up the four ends of these beams, all is lashed firmly into place, the oxen are slowly pulling, the long whips are cracking, the house is answering the gentle traction, and, already several miles away from its first site, it will to-morrow settle down upon new foundations, a homely type of one whose wreath will soon be a-making and who will soon after come to be the little house's mistress.

But what have we done—let time slip backward? A little; not much; for just then, as the ex-governor said, "And where is Bonaventure by this time?" Bonaventure had been only an hour or two in the negro cabin where fever had dragged him down

Since then the house had not only settled safely upon its new foundations, but Sosthène, in the good, thorough way that was his own, had carried renovation to a point that made the cottage to all intents and purposes a new house. And the curé had looked upon it again, much nearer by; for before a bride dared enter a house so nearly new, it had been deemed necessary for him to come and, before a temporary altar within the dwelling, to say mass in the time of full moon. But not yet was the house really a dwelling; it, and all Carancro, were waiting for the wedding. Make haste, Bonaventure.

He had left the Teche behind him on the east. And now a day breaks whose sunset finds him beyond the Vermillion River. He cannot go aside to the ex-governor's, over yonder on the right. He is making haste. This day his journey will end. His heart is light; he has thought out the whole matter now; he makes no doubt any longer that the story told him is true. And he knows now just what to do: this very sunset he will reach his goal; he goes to fill 'Thanase's voided place; to lay his own filial service at the feet of the widowed mother; to be a brother in the lost brother's

place; and Zoséphine?—why, she shall be her daughter, the same as though 'Thanase, not he, had won her. And thus, too, Zoséphine shall have her own sweet preference—that preference which she had so often whispered to him—for a scholar rather than a soldier. Such is the plan, and Conscience has given her consent.

The sun soars far overhead. It, too, makes haste. But the wasted, flushed, hungry-eyed traveller is putting the miles behind him. He questions none to-day that pass him or whom he overtakes; only bows, wipes his warm brow, and presses on across the prairie. Straight before him, though still far away, a small, white, wooden steeple rises from out a tuft of trees. It is *la chapelle!*

The distance gets less and less. See! the afternoon sunlight strikes the roofs of a few unpainted cottages that have begun to show themselves at right and left of the chapel And now he sees the green window-shutters of such as are not without them, and their copperas or indigo-dyed curtains blowing in and out. Nearer; nearer; here is a house, and yonder another, newly built. Carancro is reached.

He enters a turfy, cattle-haunted lane be-

tween rose-hedges. In a garden on one side, and presently in another over the way children whom he remembers—but grown like weeds since he saw them last—are at play; but when they stop and gaze at him it is without a sign of recognition. Now he walks down the village street. How empty it seems; was it really always so? Still, yonder is a man he knows—and yonder a woman—but they disappear without seeing him.

How familiar everything is. There are the two shops abreast of the chapel, Marx's on this side, Lichtenstein's that, their dingy false fronts covered with their same old huge rain-faded words of promise. Yonder, too, behind the blacksmith's shop is the little school-house, dirty, half-ruined, and closed—that is, wide-open, and empty—it may be for lack of a teacher, or funds, or even of scholars.

"It shall not be so," said the traveller to himself, "when *she* and I——"

His steps grow slow. Yet here, not twenty paces before him, is the home of the curé. Ah! that is just the trouble. Shall he go here first? May he not push on and out once more upon the prairie and make

himself known first of all to *her?* Stopping here first, will not the curé say tarry till to-morrow? His steps grow slower still.

And see, now. One of the Jews in the shop across the street has observed him. Now two stand together and scrutinise him; and now there are three, looking and smiling. Plainly they recognise him. One starts to come across, but on that instant the quiet of the hamlet is broken by a sound of galloping hoofs.

Bonaventure stands still. How sudden is this change! He is not noticed now; everything is in the highest animation. There are loud calls and outcries; children are shouting and running, and women's heads are thrust out of doors and windows. Horsemen come dashing into the village around through the lanes and up the street. Look! they wheel, they rein up, they throw themselves from the rattling saddles; they leave the big wooden stirrups swinging and the little unkempt ponies shaking themselves, and rush into the *boutique de* Monsieur Lichtenstein, and are talking like mad and decking themselves out on hats and shoulders with ribbons in all colours of the rainbow!

Suddenly they shout, all together, in an-

swer to a shout outside. More horsemen appear. Lichtenstein's store belches all its population.

"*La calège! La calège!*" The caleche is coming!

Something, he knows not what, makes Bonaventure tremble.

"Madame," he says in French to a chattering woman who has just run out of her door and is standing near him tying a red Madras kerchief on her head as she prattles to a girl,—"Madame, what wedding is this?"

"*C'est la noce à* Zoséphine," she replied, without looking at him, and goes straight on telling her companion how fifty dollars has been paid for the pope's dispensation, because the bridal pair are first cousins.

Bonaventure moves back and leans against a paling fence, pallid and faint. But there is no time to notice him—look, look!

Some women on horseback come trotting into the street. Cheers! cheers! and in a moment louder cheers yet—the caleche with the bride and groom and another with the parents have come!

Throw open the church door!

Horsemen alight, horsewomen descend,

down, also, come they that were in the caleche. Look, Bonaventure! They form by twos—forward—in they go. "Hats off, gentlemen! Don't forget the rule!—Now—silence! softly, softly; speak low—or speak not at all; sh-sh! Silence! The pair are kneeling. Hush-sh! Frown down that little buzz about the door! Sh-sh!"

Bonaventure has rushed in with the crowd. He cannot see the kneeling pair; but there is the curé standing over them and performing the holy rite. The priest stops—he has seen Bonaventure! He stammers, and then he goes on. Here beside Bonaventure is a girl so absorbed in the scene that she thinks she is speaking to her brother, when presently she says to the haggard young stranger, letting herself down from her tiptoes and drawing a long breath—

"*La sarimonie est fait.*"

It is true; the ceremony is ended. She rises on tiptoe again to see the new couple sign the papers.

Slowly! The bridegroom first, his mark. Step back. Now the little bride—steady! Zoséphine, *sa marque*. She turns; see her, everybody; see her! brown and pretty as a

doe! They are kissing her!—Hail, Madame 'Thanase!

"Make way, make way!" The man and wife come forth.—Ah! 'Thanase Beausoleil, so tall and strong, so happy and hale, you do not look to-day like the poor decoyed, drugged victim that woke up one morning out in the Gulf of Mexico to find yourself, without fore-intent or knowledge, one of a ship's crew bound for Brazil and thence to the Mediterranean!—"Make way, make way!" They mount the caleches, Sosthène, Madame Sosthène; 'Thanase and Madame 'Thanase. "To horse, ladies and gentlemen!" Never mind now about the youth who has been taken ill in the chapel, and whom the curé has borne almost bodily in his arms to his own house. "Mount! Mount! Move aside for the wedding singers!"—The wedding singers take their places, one on this side the bridal caleche, the other on that, and away it starts, creaking and groaning.

"*Mais, arretez!*—Stop, stop! Before going, *passez le 'nisette!*—pass the anisette!" May the New Orleans compounder be forgiven the iniquitous mixture! "*Boir les dames avant!*—Let the ladies drink first!" Aham! straight from the bottle.

Now, go. The caleche moves. Other caleches bearing parental and grandparental couples follow. And now the young men and maidens gallop after; the cavalcade stretches out like the afternoon shadows, and with shout and song and waving of hats and kerchiefs, away they go! while from window and door and village street follows the wedding cry—

"*Adieu, la calège! Adieu, la calège!*—God speed the wedding pair!"

Coming at first from the villagers, it is continued at length, faint and far, by the attending cavaliers. As mile by mile they drop aside, singly or in pairs, toward their homes, they rise in their stirrups, and lifting high their ribbon-decked hats, they shout and curvette and curvette and shout until the eye loses them and the ear can barely catch the faint farewell—

"*Adieu, la calège! Adieu, les mariées!*"

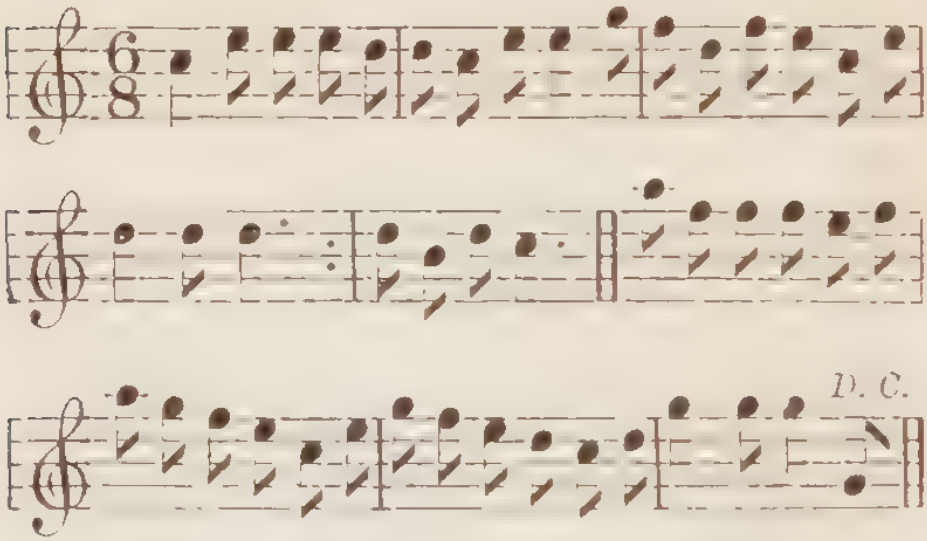
CHAPTER X.

AFTER ALL.

ADIEU; but only till the fall of night shall bring the wedding ball.

One little tune—and every Acadian fiddler in Louisiana knows it—always brings back to Zoséphine the opening scene of that festive and jocund convocation. She sees again the great clean-swept seed-cotton room of a cotton-gin house belonging to a cousin of the ex-governor lighted with many candles stuck into a perfect wealth of black bottles ranged along the beams of the walls. The fiddler's seat is mounted on a table in the corner, the fiddler is in it, each beau has led a maiden into the floor, the sets are made for the contra-dance, the young men stand expectant, their partners wait with downcast eyes and mute lips, as Acadian damsels should, the music strikes up and away they go.

Yes, Zoséphine sees the whole bright scene over again whenever that strain sounds.



It was fine from first to last! The ball closed with the bride's dance. Many a daughter Madame Sosthène had waltzed that farewell measure with, and now Zoséphine was the last. So they danced it, they two, all the crowd looking on: the one so young and lost in self, the other so full of years and lost to self; eddying round and round each other in this last bright embrace before they part, the mother to swing back into still water, the child to enter the current of a new life.

And then came the wedding supper! At one end of the long table the bride and groom sat side by side, and at their left and

right the wedding singers stood and sang. How everybody ate, that night! Rice! beef-balls! pass them here! pass them there! help yourself! reach them with a fork! *des riz! des boulettes!* more down this way! pass them over heads! *des riz! des boulettes!* And the anisette!—bad whisky and oil of anise—never mind that; pour, fill, empty, fill again! Don't take too much—and make sure not to take too little! How merrily all went on. How gay was Zoséphine!

"Does she know that Bonaventure, too, has come back?" the young maidens whisper, one to another; for the news was afloat.

"Oh yes, of course; some one had to let it slip. But if it makes any difference she is only brighter and prettier than before. I tell you—it seems strange, but I believe, now, she never cared for anybody but 'Thanase. When she heard Bonaventure had come back she only let one little flash out of her eyes at the fool who told her, then said it was the best news that could be, and has been as serene as the picture of a saint ever since."

The serenity of the bride might have been less perfect and the one flash of her eyes might have been two, had she known what

the curé was that minute saying to the returned wanderer, with the youth's head pressed upon his bosom, in the seclusion of his own chamber—

"It is all for the best, Bonaventure. It is not possible that thou shouldst see it so now, but thou shalt hereafter. It is best this way." And the tears rolled silently down his cheek as the weary head in his bosom murmured back—

"It is best. It is best."

The curé could only press him closer then. It was much more than a year afterward when he for the first time ventured to add—

"I never wanted you to get her, my dear boy; she is not your kind at all—nay, now, let me say it, since I have kept it unsaid so long and patiently. Do you imagine she could ever understand an unselfish life, or even one that tried to be unselfish? She makes an excellent Madame 'Thanase. 'Thanase is a good, vigorous, faithful, gentle animal that knows how to graze and lie in the shade and get up and graze again. But you—it is not in you to know how poor a Madame Bonaventure she would have been; not now merely, but poorer and poorer as the years go by.

"And so I say, do not go away. I know why you want to go; you want to run away from a haunting thought that some unlikely accident or other may leave Madame Thanase a widow and you step into his big shoes. They would not fit. Do not go. That thing is not going to happen; and the way to get rid of the troublesome notion is to stay and see yourself outgrow it—and her."

Bonaventure shook his head mournfully, but stayed. From time to time Madame 'Thanase passed before his view in pursuit of her outdoor and indoor cares. But even when he came under her galerie roof he could see that she never doubted she had made the very best choice in all Carancro.

And yet people knew—she knew—that Bonaventure not only enjoyed the acquaintance, but sometimes actually went from one place to another on the business of the great ex-governor. Small matters they may have been, but, anyhow, just think!

Sometimes as he so went or came he saw her squatting on a board at the edge of a *coolée*, her petticoat wrapped snugly around her limbs, and a limp sunbonnet hiding her nut-brown face, pounding her washing with

a wooden paddle. She was her own housekeeper, chambermaid, cook, washerwoman, gooseherd, seamstress, nurse, and all the rest. Her floors, they said, were always *bien fourbissée* (well scrubbed), her beds were high, soft, snug, and covered with the white mesh of her own crochet needle.

He saw her the oftener because she worked much out on her low verandah. From that place she had a broad outlook upon the world, with 'Thanase in the foreground, at his toil, sometimes at his sport. His cares as a herder, *vacheur*,—*caché*, he called it, —were wherever his slender-horned herds might roam or his stallions lead their mares in search of the sweetest herbage; and when rains filled the *marais* and the cold nor'-westers blew from Texas and the sod was spongy with much water, and he went out for feathered game, the numberless mallards, black ducks, grey ducks, teal—with sometimes the canvas-back—and the *poules-d'eau* —the water-hens and the rails, and the *cache-cache*—the snipe—were as likely to settle or rise just before his own house as elsewhere, and the most devastating shot that hurtled through those feathered multitudes was that sent by her husband—hers—

her own—possessive case—belonging to her. She was proud of her property.

Sometimes *la vieille*—for she was *la vieille* from the very day that she counted her wedding presents, mostly chickens, and turned them loose in the door-yard—sometimes she enjoyed the fine excitement of seeing her *vieux* catching and branding his yearling colts. Small but not uncomely they were: tougher, stronger, better, when broken, than the mustang, though, like the mustang, begotten and foaled on the open prairie. Often she saw him catch two for the plough in the morning, turn them loose at noon to find their own food and drink, and catch and work another pair through the afternoon. So what did not give her pride gave her quiet comfort. Sometimes she looked forth with an anxious eye, when a colt was to be broken for the saddle; for as its legs were untied, and it sprang to its feet with 'Thanase in the saddle, and the blindfold was removed from its eyes, the strain on the young wife's nerves was as much as was good, to see the creature's tremendous leaps in air and not tremble for its superb, unmovable rider.

Could scholarship be finer—or as fine—as such horsemanship? And yet, somehow, as time ran on, Zoséphine, like all the rest of Carancro, began to look up with a certain deference, half conscious, half unconscious, to the needy young man who was nobody's love or lover and yet, in a gentle, unimpassioned way, everybody's. Landless, penniless, artless Bonaventure, who honestly thought there was no girl in Carancro who was not much too good for him, and of whom there was not one who did not think him much too good for her. He was quite outside of all their gossip. How could they know that with all his learning—for he could read and write in two languages and took the Vermillionville newspaper—and with all his books, almost an entire mantel-shelf full—he was feeling heart hunger the same as any ordinary lad or lass unmated. Zoséphine found her eyes, so to speak, lifting, lifting, more and more as from time to time she looked upon the inoffensive Bonaventure. But so her satisfaction in her own husband was all the more emphatic. If she had ever caught a real impulse toward anything that even Carancro would have called culture, she had cast it aside now—as to

herself; her children—oh! yes; but that would be by and by.

Even of pastimes and sports she saw almost none. For 'Thanase there was, first of all, his fiddle; then *la chasse*, the chase; the *papegaie*, or, as he called it, *pad-go*—the shooting-match; *la galloche*, pitch-farthing; the cock-fight; the five-arpent pony-race; and too often, also, *chin-chin*, twenty-five-cent poker, and the gossip and glass of the roadside "store." But for Madame 'Thanase there was only a seat against the wall at the Saturday-night dance, and mass *à la chapelle* once in two or three weeks; these and infant baptisms. These showed how fast time and life were hurrying along. The wedding seemed but yesterday, and yet here was little Sosthène, and tiny Marguerite, and cooing Zoséphine the younger—how fast history repeats itself!

But one day, one Sunday, it repeated itself in a different way. He was in gay humour that morning. He kissed his wife, tossed his children, played on his fiddle that tune they all liked best, and, while Zoséphine looked after him with young zest in her eye, sprang into the saddle and galloped across the prairie *à la chapelle* to

pass a jolly forenoon at *chin-chin* in the village grocery.

Since the war almost every one went armed—not for attack, of course; for defence. 'Thanase was an exception.

"My fists," he said, in the good old drawling Acadian dialect and with his accustomed smile—"my fists will take care of me."

One of the party that made up the game with 'Thanase was the fellow whom you may remember as having brought that first news of 'Thanase from camp to Carancro, and whom Zoséphine had discredited. The young husband had never liked him since.

But, as I say, 'Thanase was in high spirits. His jests came thick and fast, and some were hard and personal, and some were barbed with truth, and one, at length, ended in the word "deserter." The victim grew instantly fierce and red, leaped up crying "liar," and was knocked backward to the ground by the long-reaching fist of 'Thanase. He rose again and dashed at his assailant. The rest of the company hastily made way to right and left, chairs were overturned, over went the table, the cards were underfoot. Men ran in from outside and from over the way. The two foes clash

together, 'Thanase smites again with his fist, and the other grapples. They tug and strain—

"Separate them!" cry two or three of the packed crowd in suppressed earnestness. "Separate them! Bonaventure is coming! And here from the other side the curé too! Oh, get them apart!" But the half-hearted interference is shaken off. 'Thanase sees Bonaventure and the curé enter; mortification smites him; a smothered cry of rage bursts from his lips; he tries to hurl his antagonist from him; and just as the two friends reach out to lay hands upon the wrestling mass, it goes with a great thud to the ground. The crowd recoils and springs back again; then a cry of amazement and horror from all around, the arm of the under man lifted out over the back of the other, a downward flash of steel — another — and another! the long, subsiding wail of a strong man's sudden despair, the voice of one crying—

"Zoséphine! Ah! Zoséphine, *ma vieille! ma vieille!*"—one long moan and sigh, and the finest horseman, the sweetest musician, the bravest soldier, yes, and the best husband, in all Carancro was dead.

Poor old Sosthene and his wife! How hard they tried, for days, for weeks, to comfort their widowed child. But in vain. Day and night she put them away in fierce grief and silence, or if she spoke wailed always the one implacable answer—

"I want my husband!" And to the curé the same words—

"Go tell God I want my husband!"

But when at last came one who, having come to speak, could only hold her hand in his, and silently weep with her, she clung to his with both her own, and looking up into his young, thin face cried,—not with grace of words, and yet with some grace in all her words' Acadian ruggedness—

"Bonaventure! Ah! Bonaventure! thou who knowest the way—teach me, my brother, how to be patient."

And so—though the ex-governor had just offered him a mission in another part of the Acadians' land, a mission, as he thought, far beyond his deserving, though, in fact, so humble that to tell you what it was would force your smile—he stayed.

A year went by, and then another. Zoséphine no longer lifted to heaven a mutinous and aggrieved countenance. Bonaventure

was often nigh, and his words were a deep comfort. Yet often, too, her spirit flashed impatience through her eyes when in the childish philosophising of which he was so fond he put forward—though ever so impersonally and counting himself least of all to have attained—the precepts of self-conquest and abnegation. And then, as the flash passed away, with a moisture of the eye repudiated by the pride of the lip, she would slowly shake her head and say—

"It is of no use; I can't do it! I may be too young—I may be too bad, but—I can't learn it!"

At last, one September evening, Bonaventure stood at the edge of Sosthéne's galerie, whither Zoséphine had followed out, leaving *le vieux* and *la vieille* in the house. On the morrow Bonaventure was to leave Carancro. And now he said—

"Zoséphine, I must go."

"Ah, Bonaventure!" she replied, "my children—what will my children do? It is not only that you have taught them to spell and read, though God will be good to you for that! But these two years you have been everything to them—everything. They will be orphaned over again, Bonaventure."

Tears shone in her eyes, and she turned away her face with her dropped hands clasped together.

The young man laid his hand upon her drooping brow. She turned again and lifted her eyes to his. His lips moved silently, but she read upon them the unheard utterance: it was a word of blessing and farewell. Slowly and tenderly she drew down his hand, laid a kiss upon it, and said—

"*Adjieu—adjieu*," and they parted.

As Zoséphine went with erect form and firm, clear tread by her parents and into the inner room where her children lay in their trundle-bed, the old mother said to *le vieux*—

"You can go ahead and repair the school-house now. Our daughter will want to begin, even to-morrow, to teach the children of the village—*les zonfants à la chapelle*."

"You think so?" said Sosthène, but not as if he doubted.

"Yes; it is certain now that Zoséphine will always remain the Widow 'Thanase."

GRANDE POINTE.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGER.

FROM College Point to Bell's Point, sixty miles above New Orleans, the Mississippi runs nearly from west to east. Both banks, or "coasts," are lined with large and famous sugar plantations. Midway on the northern side lie the beautiful estates of "Belmont" and "Belle Alliance." Early one morning in the middle of October 1878, a young man whose age you would have guessed fifteen years too much stood in scrupulously clean, ill-fitting, flimsy garments on the strong, high levee overlooking these two plantations. He was asking the way to a place called Grande Pointe. Grand Point, he called it, and so may we: many names in Louisiana that retain the French spelling are habitually given an English pronunciation.

A tattered negro mounted on a sunburnt, unshod, bare-backed mule down in the

dusty grey road on the land side of the embankment was his only hearer. Fifteen years earlier these two men, with French accents, strangers to each other, would hardly have conversed in English; but the date made the difference. We need not inexorably render the dialect of the white man; pretty enough to hear, it would often be hideous to print. The letter *r*, for instance, that plague of all nations—before consonants it disappeared; before vowels the tongue failed of that upward curve that makes the good strong *r*'s of Italy and Great Britain.

The negro pointed over his mule's ears.

"You see Belle Alliance sugah-house yondeh? Well, behine dah you fine one road go stret thoo the plantation till de wood. Dass 'bout mile, you know. Den she keep stret on thoo de wood 'bout two mile' mo', an' dat fetch you at Gran' Point'. Hole on; I show you."

The two men started down the road, the negro on his mule, the stranger along the levee's crown. "Dat Gran' Point'," resumed the black, "'tain't no point on de riveh, you know, like dat Bell' Point, w'at you see yondeh, 'twixt dem ah batture

willows whah de sun all spread out on the wateh ; no, seh. 'Tis jis lil place back in de *swamp*, raise' 'bout five, six feet 'bove de wateh. Yes, seh ; 'bout t'ree mile' long, 'alf mile wide. Don't nobody but Cajun'[1] live back deh. Seem droll you goin' yondeh."

"'Tis the reason I go," said the other without looking up.

"Yes, seh."—A short silence.—"Dass nigh fifty year', now, dat place done been settle'. Ole 'Mian Roussel he was gret hunter. He know dat place. He see 'tis rich groun'. One day he come dare, cut some tree', buil' house, plant lil tobahcah. Nex' year come ole man Le Blanc; den Poché, den St. Pierre, den Martin, — all Cajun'. Oh ! dass mo'n fifty year' 'go. Dey all comes from dis yeh riveh coast ; 'caze de rich Creole', dey buy 'em out. Yes, seh, dat use' be de *Côte Acadien'*, right yeh whar yo' feet stan'in' on. *C'est la côte Acadien', just ici, oui.*" The trudging stranger waived away the right of translation. He had some reason for preferring English. But his manner was very gentle, and in a moment the negro began again.

"Gret place, dat Gran' Point'. Yes, seh ;

[1] Acadians.

fo' tobahcah. Dey make de bes' Périque tobahcah in de worl'. Yes, seh, right yond' at Gran' Point'; an' de bes' Périque w'at come from Gran' Point', das de Périque of Octave Roussel, w'at dey use call 'im Chatoué;[1] but he git tired dat name, and now he got lil boy 'bout twenny-five year' ole, an' dey call de ole man Catou, an' call his lil *boy* Chatoué. Dey fine dat wuck mo' betteh. Yes, seh. An' he got bruddeh name' 'Mian Roussel. But dat not de ole, ole 'Mian—like dey say de ole he one. 'Caze, you know, he done peg out. Oh yes, he peg out in de du'in' o' de waugh.[2] But he lef' heap-sight chillen; you know, he got a year' staht o' all de res', you know. Yes, seh. Dey got 'bout hund'ed fifty peop' yond' by Gran' Point', and sim like dey mos' all name Roussel. *Sim* dat way to *me*. An' ev'y las' one got lil fahm so lil you can't plow her; got dig her up wid a spade. Yes, seh, same like you diggin' grave; yes, seh."

The gentle stranger interrupted, still without lifting his eyes from the path. "'Tis better narrowness of land than of virtue." The negro responded eagerly—

[1] Raccoon. [2] During the war.

"Oh, dey good sawt o' peop', yes! Dey deals fair an' dey deals square. Dey keeps de peace. Dass 'caze dey mos'ly don't let whisky git on deir blin' side, you know. Dey *does* love to dance, and dey marries mawnstus young; but dey not like some niggehs: dey stays married. An' modess? Dey des so modess dey shy! Yes, seh, dey de shyes', easy-goin'es', modesses', most p'esumin' peop' in de whole worl'! I don't see fo' why folks talk 'gin dem Cajun'; on'y dey a lil bit slow."

The traveller on the levee's top suddenly stood still, a soft glow on his cheek, a distention in his blue eyes. "My friend, what was it, the first American industry? Was it not the Newfoundland fisheries? Who inaugu'ate them if not the fishermen of Normandy and Bretagne? And since how long? Nearly fo' hundred years!"

"Dass so, boss," exclaimed the negro with the promptitude of an eye-witness; but the stranger continued—

"The ancestors of the Acadian'—they are the fathers of the codfish!" He resumed his walk.

"Dass so, seh; dass true. Yes, seh, you talkin' mighty true; dey a pow'ful ancestri-

fied peop', dem Cajun'; dass w'at make dey so shy, you know. An' dey mighty good han' in de sugah-house. Dey des watchin', now, w'en dat sugah-cane git ready fo' biggin to grind; so soon dey see dat, dey des come a-lopin' in here to Mistoo Wallis' sugah-house here at Belle Alliance, an' likewise to Marse Louis Le Bourgeois yond' at Belmont. You see! de fust t'ing dey gwine ass you when you come at Gran' Point'—'Is Mistoo Wallis biggin to grind?' Well, seh, like I tell you, yeh de sugah-house, an' dah de road. Dat road fetch you at Gran' Point'."

CHAPTER II.

IN A STRANGE LAND.

AN hour later the stranger, quite alone, had left behind him the broad smooth road, between rustling walls of sugar-cane, that had brought him through Belle Alliance plantation. The way before him was little more than a bridle-path along the earth thrown up beside a draining ditch in a dense swamp. The eye could run but a little way ere it was confused by the tangle of vegetation. The trees of the all-surrounding forest—sweet-gums, water-oaks, magnolias—cast their shade obliquely along and across his way, and wherever it fell the undried dew still sparkled on the long grass.

A pervading whisper seemed to say good-bye to the great human world. Scarce the note of an insect joined with his footsteps in the coarse herbage to break the stillness. He made no haste. Ferns were often about his feet, and vines were both there and

everywhere. The soft blue tufts of the ageratum were on each side continually. Here and there in wet places clumps of Indian-shot spread their pale scroll leaves and sent up their green and scarlet spikes. Of stature greater than his own the golden-rod stood, crested with yellow plumes, unswayed by the still air. Often he had to push apart the brake-canes and press through with bowed head. Nothing met him in the path. Now and then there were faint signs underfoot as if wheels might have crushed the ragged turf long weeks before. Now and then the print of a hoof was seen in the black soil, but a spider had made it her home and spread across it her silken snares. If he halted and hearkened, he heard far away the hawk screaming to his mate, and may be, looking up, caught a glimpse of him sailing in the upper air with the sunlight glowing in his pinions; or in some bush near by heard the soft rustle of the wren, or the ruffling whiff and nervous "chip" of the cardinal, or saw for an instant the flirt of his crimson robes as he rattled the stiff, jagged fans of the palmetto.

At length the path grew easier and lighter, the woods on the right gave place to a field

half claimed for cotton and half given up to persimmon saplings, blackberry bushes, and rampant weeds. A furry pony with mane and tail so loaded with cockleburs that he could not shake them, lifted his head and stared. A moment afterward the view opened to right and left, and the path struck a grassy road at right angles and ended. Just there stood an aged sow.

"Unclean one," said the grave wayfarer, "where dwells your master?—Ignore you the English tongue? But I shall speak not in another; 'tis that same that I am arriving to bring you."

The brute, with her small bestial eye fixed on him distrustfully and askance, moved enough to the right to let him pass on the other hand, and with his coat on his arm—so strong was the October sun—he turned into the road westward, followed one or two of its slight curves, and presently saw neat fields on either hand walled in on each farther side by the moss-hung swamp; and now a small, grey, unpainted house, then two or three more, the roofs of others peering out over the dense verdure, and down at the end of the vista a small white spire and cross. Then, at another angle, two

men seated on the roadside. Their diffident gaze bore that look of wild innocence that belongs to those who see more of dumb nature than of men. Their dress was homespun. The older was about fifty years old, the other much younger.

"Sirs, have I already reach Gran' Point'?"

The older replied in an affirmative that could but just be heard, laid back a long lock of his straight brown hair after the manner of a short-haired girl, and rose to his feet.

"I hunt," said the traveller slowly, "Mr. Maximian Roussel."

A silent bow.

"'Tis you?"

The same motion again.

The traveller produced a slip of paper folded once, and containing a line or two of writing hastily pencilled that morning at Belle Alliance. Maximian received it timidly and held it helplessly before his downcast eyes with the lines turned perpendicularly, while the pause grew stifling, and until the traveller said—

"'Tis Mr. Wallis make that introduction."

At the name of the owner of the beautiful plantation the man who had not yet spoken

rose, covered with whittlings. It was like a steer getting up out of the straw. He spoke.

"M'sieu' Walleece, *a commencé à mouliner?* Is big-in to gryne?"

"He shall commence in the centre of the next week."

Maximian's eyes rose slowly from the undeciphered paper. The traveller's met them. He pointed to the missive.

"The schoolmaster therein alluded—'tis me."

"Oh!" cried the villager joyously,—"*maître d'école!*—schooltitcher!"

"But," said the stranger, "not worthy the title." He accepted gratefully the hand of one and then of the other.

"Walk een!" said Maximian, "all hand', walk een house." They went, Indian file, across the road, down a sinuous footpath, over a stile, and up to his little single-story unpainted house, and tramped in upon the railed galerie.

"*Et* M'sieu' Le Bourgeois," said the host, as the schoolmaster accepted a split-bottomed chair, "he 's big-in to gryne?"

Within this ground-floor verandah—chief appointment of all Acadian homes—the traveller accepted a drink of water in a blue

tumbler, brought by the meek wife. The galerie just now was scattered with the husband's appliances for making Périque tobacco into "carats"—the carat-press. Its small, iron-ratcheted, wooden windlass extended along the top rail of the balustrade across one of the galerie's ends. Lines of half-inch grass rope, for wrapping the carats into diminished bulk and solid shape, lay along under foot. Beside one of the doors, in deep hickory baskets, were the parcels of cured tobacco swaddled in cotton cloths and ready for the torture of ropes and windlass. From the joists overhead hung the pods of tobacco seed for next year's planting.

CHAPTER III.

THE HANDSHAKING.

THERE was news in Grande Pointe. The fair noon sky above, with its peaceful flocks of clouds; the solemn, wet forest round about; the harvested fields; the dishevelled, fragrant fallows; the reclining, ruminating cattle; the little chapel of St. Vincent de Paul in the midst, open for mass once a fortnight, for a sermon in French four times a year,—these were not more tranquil in the face of the fact that a schoolmaster had come to Grande Pointe to *stay* than outwardly appeared the peaceful-minded villagers. Yet as the tidings floated among the people, touching and drifting on like thistle-down, they were stirred within, and came by ones, by twos, slow-stepping, diffidently smiling, to shake hands with the young great man. They wiped their own before offering them—the men on their strong thighs, the women on their aprons.

Children came, whose courage would carry them no nearer than the galerie's end or front edge, where they lurked and hovered, or gazed through the balustrade, or leaned against a galerie post and rubbed one brown bare foot upon another and crowded each other's shoulders without assignable cause, or lopped down upon the grass and gazed from a distance.

Little conversation was offered. The curiosity was as unobtrusive as the diffidence was without fear; and when a villager's soft, low speech was heard, it was generally in answer to inquiries necessary for one to make who was about to assume the high office of educator. Moreover, the schoolmaster revealed, with all gentleness, his preference for the English tongue, and to this many could only give ear. Only two or three times did the conversation rise to a pitch that kindled even the ready ardour of the young man of letters. Once, after a prolonged silence, the host, having gazed long upon his guest, said, without preface—

"Tough job you got," and waved a hand toward the hovering children.

"Sir," replied the young scholar, "is it

not the better to do whilse it is the mo' tough? The mo' toughness, the mo' honour." He rose suddenly, brushed back the dry, brown locks of his fine hair, and extending both hands, with his limp, straw hat dangling in one, said: "Sir, I will ask you, is not the schoolmaster the true patriot? Shall his honour be less than of the soldier? Yet I ask not honour; for me, I am not fit; yet, after my poor capacities——" He resumed his seat.

An awesome quiet followed. Then some one spoke to him, too low to be heard. He bent forward to hear the words repeated, and 'Mian said for the timorous speaker—

"Aw, dass nut'n; he jis only say, 'Is M'sieu' Walleece big-in to gryne?'"

Few tarried long, though one man—he whom the schoolmaster had found sitting on the roadside with Maximian—stayed all day; and even among the villagers themselves there was almost no loquacity. Maximian, it is true, as the afternoon wore along, and it seemed plain that the reception was a great and spontaneous success, spoke with growing frequency and heartiness; and, when the guest sat down alone at a table within, where *la vieille* — the wife — was

placing half a dozen still sputtering fried eggs, a great wheaten loaf, a yellow gallon bowl of boiled milk, a pewter ladle, a bowie knife, the blue tumbler, and a towel, and out on the galerie the callers were still coming, his simple neighbours pardoned the elation that led him to take a chair himself a little way off, sit on it sidewise, cross his legs gaily, and with a smile and wave of his good brown hand say—

"*Seree-vous!* He'p youse'f! Eat much you like till you well up!"

Even he asked no questions. Only near the end of the day, when the barefoot children by gradual ventures had at length gathered close about and were softly pushing for place on his knees and huddling under his arms, and he was talking French, —the only language most of them knew,—he answered the first personal inquiry put to him since arriving. "His name," he replied to the tiny, dark, big-eyed boy who spoke for his whispering fellows, "his name was Bonaventure—Bonaventure Deschamps."

As the great October sun began to dip his crimson wheel behind the low black line of swamp and the chapel cross stood out

against a band of yellow light that spanned the west, he walked out to see the village, a little girl on either hand and little boys round about. The children talked apace. Only the girl whose hand he held in his right was mute. She was taller than the rest; yet it was she to whom the little big-eyed boy pointed when he said, vain of his ability to tell it in English—

"I don't got but eight year' old, me. I 'm gran' for my age; but she, she not gran' for her age—Sidonie; no; she not gran' at all for *her* age."

They told the story of the chapel: how some years before, in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, at the parish seat a few miles away on the Mississippi, a nun had by the pope's leave cast off the veil; how she had come to Grande Pointe and taken charge of her widowed brother's children; and how he had died, and she had found means, the children knew not how, to build this chapel. And now she was buried under it, they said. It seemed, from what they left unsaid as well as what they said, that the simple influence of her presence had kindled a desire for education in Grande Pointe not known before.

"Dass my *tante*—my hant. She *was* my hant befo' she die'," said the little man of eight years, hopping along the turf in front of the rest. He dropped into a walk that looked rapid, facing round and moving backward. "She learn me English, my *tante*. And she try to learn Sidonie; but Sidonie, Sidonie fine that too strong to learn, that English, Sidonie." He hopped again, talking as he hopped and holding the lifted foot in his hand. He could do that and speak English at the same time, so talented was Toutou.

Thus the sun went down. And at Maximian's stile again Bonaventure Deschamps took the children's cheeks into his slender fingers and kissed them, one by one, beginning at the least and so up, slowly, toward Sidonie Le Blanc. With very earnest tenderness it was done, some grave word of inspiration going before each caress; but when at last he said, "To-morrow, dear chil'run, the school-bell shall ring in Gran' Point'!" and turned to finish with Sidonie —she was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE CHILDREN RANG THE BELL.

WHERE the fields go wild and grow into brakes and the soil becomes fenny, on the north-eastern edge of Grande Pointe, a dark, slender thread of a bayou moves loiteringly north-eastward into a swamp of huge cypresses. In there it presently meets another like itself, the Bayou Tchackchou, slipping around from the little farm village's eastern end as silently as a little mother comes out of a bower where she has just put her babe to sleep. A little further on they are joined as noiselessly by Blind River, and the united waters slip on northward through the dim, colonnaded, watery-floored, green-roofed, blue-vapoured, moss-draped wilderness, till in the adjoining parish of Ascension they curve around to the east and issue into the sunny breadth of Lake Maurepas. Thus they make the Bayou des Acadiens. From Lake Maurepas one can go up Amite or

Tickfaw River, or to Pass Manchac or Pontchatoula, anywhere in the world, in fact, — where a canoe can go.

On a bank of this bayou, no great way from Grande Pointe, but with the shadow of the swamp at its back and a small, bright prairie of rushes and giant weeds stretching away from the opposite shore, stood, more in the water than on the land, the palmetto-thatched fishing and hunting lodge and only home of a man who on the other side of the Atlantic you would have known for a peasant of Normandy, albeit he was born in that swamp, — the man who had tarried all day at the schoolmaster's handshaking.

What a day that had been! Once before he had witnessed a positive event. That was when, one day, he journeyed purposely to the levee of Belle Alliance, waited from morning till evening, and at last saw the steamer *Robert E. Lee* come by and, as fortune would have it, land! loaded with cotton from the water to the hurricane deck! He had gone home resolved from that moment to save his money and be something more than he was.

But that event had flashed before his eyes and in a quarter-hour was gone, save in his

memory. The coming of the schoolmaster, all unforeseen, had lasted a day, and he had seen it from beginning to end. All day long on 'Mian's galerie, standing now here, now there, he had got others to interpret for him, where he could not guess, the meanings of the wise and noble utterances that fell now and then from the lips of the young soldier of learning, and stored them away in his now greedy mind.

One saying in particular, whose originality he did not dream of questioning, took profound hold of his conviction and admiration; and two or three times as his canoe glided homeward in the twilight, its one long, smooth ripple gleaming on this side and that as it stretched away toward the bayou's dark banks, he rested for a moment on his tireless paddle and softly broke the silence of the wilderness with its three simple words, so trite to our ears, so strange to his—

"Knowledge is power."

In years he was but thirty-five, but he was a widower, and the one son who was his only child and companion would presently be fourteen.

"Claude," he said, as they rose that evening from their hard supper in the light and

fumes of their small kerosene-lamp, "*I' faut z-ahler coucher.*" (We must go to bed.)

"*Quofoir?*" asked the sturdy lad. (*Pour quoi?* Why?)

"Because," replied the father in the same strange French in which he had begun, "at daybreak to-morrow, and every day thereafter, you must be in your dug-out on your way to Grande Pointe, to school. My son, you are going to learn how to read!"

So came it that, until their alphabetical rearrangement, the first of all the thirty-five names on the roll was Claude St. Pierre, and that every evening thenceforward when that small kerosene-lamp glimmered in the deep darkness of Bayou des Acadiens, the abecedarian Claude was a teacher.

But even before the first rough roll was made he was present, under the little chapel tower, when for the first time its bell rang for school. The young master was there, and all the children; so that really there was nothing to ring the bell for. They could, all together, have walked quietly across the village green to the forlorn tobacco-shed that 'Mian had given them for a school-house and begun the session. Ah! say not so! It was good to ring the

bell. A few of the stronger lads would even have sent the glad clang abroad before the time, but Bonaventure restrained them. For one thing, there must be room for every one to bear a hand. So he tied above their best reach three strands of "carat" cord to the main rope. Even then he was not ready.

"No, dear chil'run; but grasp hold, every one, the ropes, the cawds,—the shawt chil'run reaching up shawtly, the long chil'run the more longly."

Few understood his words, but they quietly caught the idea and yielded themselves eagerly to his arranging hand. The highest grasp was Claude's. There was a little empty space under it, and then one only of Sidonie's hands, timid, smooth, and brown. And still the master held back the word.

"Not yet! not yet! The pear is not ripe!" He stood apart from them, near the chapel door, where the light was strong, his silver watch open in his left hand, his form erect, his right hand lifted to the brim of his hat, his eyes upon the dial.

"Not yet, dear chil'run. Not yet. Have the patience. Hold every one in his aw her place. Be ready! Have the patience."

But at length when the little ones were frowning and softly sighing with the pain of upheld arms, their waiting eyes saw his dilate. "Be ready!" he said, with low intensity: "Be ready!" He soared to his tiptoes, the hat flounced from his head and smote his thigh, his eyes turned upon them blazing, and he cried, "Ring, chil'run, ring!"

The elfin crew leaped up the ropes and came crouching down. The bell pealed; the master's hat swung round his head. His wide eyes were wet, and he cried again, "Ring! ring! for God, light, libbutty, education!" He sprang toward the leaping, sinking mass; but the right feeling kept his own hands off. And up and down the children went, the bell answering from above, peal upon peal; when just as they had caught the rhythm of Claude's sturdy pull and the bell could sound no louder, the small cords gave way from their fastenings, the little ones rolled upon their backs, the bell gave one ecstatic double clang and turned clear over, the swift rope straightened upward from its coil, and Claude and Sidonie, her hands clasped upon each other about the rope and his hands upon hers,

shot up three times as high as their finest leap could have carried them. For an instant they hung; then with another peal the bell turned back and they came blushing to the floor. A swarm of hands darted to the rope, but Bonaventure's was on it first.

"'Tis sufficient!" he said, his face all triumph. The bell gave a lingering clang or two and ceased, and presently the happy company walked across the green. "Sufficient," the master had said; but it was more than sufficient. In that moment of suspension, with Sidonie's great brown frightened eyes in his, and their four hands clasped together, Claude had learned, for his first lesson, that knowledge is not the only or the greatest power.

CHAPTER V.

INVITED TO LEAVE.

AFTER that, every school-day morning Claude rang the bell. Always full early his pirogue came gliding out of the woods and up through the bushy fen to the head of canoe navigation and was hauled ashore. Bonaventure had fixed his home near the chapel and not far from Claude's hiding-place. Thus the lad could easily come to his door each morning at the right moment—reading it by hunter's signs in nature's book—to get the word to ring. There were none of the usual reasons that the schoolmaster should live close to the school-house. There was no demand for its key.

Not of that school-house! A hundred feet length by twenty-five breadth, of earth-floored, clapboard-roofed, tumbling shed rudely walled with cypress split boards,—*pieux*,—a hand-breadth space between every

two, stood endwise in the earth, like palisades, sunlight and fresh air and the gleams of green fields coming in ; the scores of little tobacco-presses that had stood in ranks on the hard earth floor, the great sapling levers, and the festoons of curing tobacco that had hung from the joists overhead, all removed, only the odour left ; bold gaps here and there in the *pieux*, made by that mild influence which the restless call decay, and serving for windows and doors ; the eastern end swept clean and occupied by a few benches and five or six desks, strong, home-made, sixty-four pounders.

Life had broadened with Claude in two directions. On one side opened, fair and noble, the acquaintanceship of Bonaventure Deschamps, a man who had seen the outside world, a man of books, of learning, a man who could have taught even geography, had there been any one to learn it ; and on the other side, like a garden of roses and spices, the schoolmateship of Sidonie Le Blanc. To you and me she would have seemed the merest little brown bud of a thing, almost nothing but two big eyes—like a little owl. To Claude it seemed as though nothing older or larger could be exactly in the prime of

beauty ; the path to learning was the widest, floweriest, fragrantest path he had ever trod.

Sidonie did not often speak with him. At recess she usually stayed at her desk, studying, quite alone but for Bonaventure silently busy at his, and Claude himself, sitting further away, whenever the teacher did not see him and drive him to the playground. If he would only drive Sidonie out ! But he never did.

One day, after quite a contest of learning, and as the hour of dismission was scattering the various groups across the green, Touton, the little brother who was grand for his age, said to Claude, hanging timidly near Sidonie—

"*Alle est plus* smart' *que vous.*" (She is smarter than you.)

Whereupon Sidonie made haste to say in their Acadian French, "Ah ! Master Touton, you forget we went to school to our dear aunt. And besides, I am small and look young, but I am nearly a year older than Claude." She had wanted to be kind, but that was the first thorn. Older than he !

And not only that ; nearly fifteen ! Why, at fifteen—at fifteen girls get married ! The odds were heavy. He wished he had thought

of that at first. He was sadly confused. Sometimes when Bonaventure spoke words of enthusiasm and regard to him after urging him fiercely up some hill of difficulty among the bristling heights of English pronunciation, he yearned to seek him alone and tell him this difficulty of the heart. There was no fear that Bonaventure would laugh ; he seemed scarce to know how ; and his smiles were all of tenderness and zeal. Claude did not believe the ten years between them would matter ; had not Bonaventure said to him but yesterday that to him all loveliness was the lovelier for being very young ? Yet when the confession seemed almost on Claude's lips, it was driven back by an alien mood in the master's face. There were troubles in Bonaventure's heart that Claude wot not of.

One day who should drop in just as school was about to begin but the priest from College Point. Such order as he found ! Bonaventure stood at his desk like a general on a high hill, his large hand-bell in his grasp, passed his eyes over the seventeen demure girls, with their large, brown-black, liquid eyes, their delicately pencilled brows, their dark, waveless hair, and sounded one

tap! The sport outside ceased, the gaps at the shed's farther end were darkened by small forms that came darting like rabbits into their burrows, eighteen small hats came off, and the eighteen boys came softly forward and took their seats. Such discipline!

"Sir," said Bonaventure, "think you 'tis arising f'om the strickness of the teacher? 'Tis f'om the goodness of the chil'run! How I long the State Sup'inten'ent Public Education to see them!"

The priest commended the sight and the wish with smiling affirmations that somehow seemed to lack sympathy. He asked the names of two or three pupils. That little fellow with soft, tanned, chubby cheeks and great black eyes, tiny mouth, smooth feet so shapely and small, still wet to their ankles with dew, and arms that he could but just get folded, was Toutou. That lad with the strong shoulders, good wide brows, steady eye, and general air of manliness,—that was Claude St. Pierre. And this girl over on the left here,—"You observe," said Bonaventure, "I situate the lambs on the left and the kids on the right,"—this little, slender crescent of human moonlight, with her hair in two heavy, black, down-falling

plaits, meek, drooping eyes, long lashes, soft childish cheeks and full throat, was Sidonie Le Blanc. Bonaventure murmured—

"Best scholah in the school, yet the *only* —that loves not her teacher. But I give always my interest, not according to the interestingness, but rather to the necessitude, of each."

The visit was not long. Standing, about to depart, the visitor seemed still, as at the first, a man of many reservations under his polite smiles. But just then dropping a phrase that the teacher recognised as an indirect quotation, Bonaventure cried, with greedy eyes—

"You have read Victor Hugo?"

"Yes."

"Oh, sir, that grea-a-at man! That father of libbutty! Other patriots are the sons, but he the father! Is it not thus?"

The priest shrugged and made a mouth. The young schoolmaster's face dropped.

"Sir, I must ask you—is he not the frien' of the poor and downtrod?"

The visitor's smile quite disappeared. He said—

"Oh!"—and waved a hand impatiently; "Victor Hugo"—another mouth—"Victor

Hugo"—replying in French to the schoolmaster's English—"is not of my party." And then he laughed unpleasantly and said good-day.

The State Superintendent did not come, but every day—"It is perhaps he shall come to-mo'w, chil'run; have yo' lessons well!"

The whole tiny army of long, blue cotton-ade pantalettes and pantaloons tried to fulfil the injunction. Not one but had a warm place in the teacher's heart. But Toutou, Claude, Sidonie, anybody who glanced into that heart could see sitting there enthroned. And some did that kind of reconnoitring. Catou, 'Mian's older brother, was much concerned. He saw no harm in a little education, but took no satisfaction in the introduction of English speech; and speaking to 'Mian of that reminded him to say he believed the schoolmaster himself was aware of the three children's pre-eminence in his heart. But 'Mian only said—

"*Ah bien, c'est* all right, *alors!*" (Well, then, it 's all right.) Whether all right or not, Bonaventure was aware of it, and tried to hide it under special kindnesses to others, and particularly to the dullard of the school,

grandson of Catou and nicknamed *Crébiche.*[1] The child loved him ; and when Claude rang the chapel bell, and before its last tap had thrilled dreamily on the morning air, when the urchins playing about the school-house espied another group coming slowly across the common with Bonaventure in the midst of them, his coat on his arm and the children's hands in his, there among them came Crébiche, now on one side, now running round to the other, hoping so to get a little nearer to the master.

"None shall have such kindness to-day as thou," Bonaventure would silently resolve as he went in through a gap in the *pieux.* And the children could not see but he treated them all alike. They saw no unjust inequality even when, Crébiche having three times spelt earth with an *u*, the master paced to and fro on the bare ground among the unmatched desks and break-back benches, running his hands through his hair and crying—

"Well ! well aht thou name' the crawfish ; with such rapiditive celeritude dost thou progress backwardly ! "

It must have been to this utterance that he alluded when at the close of that day he

[1] *Écrevisse*, crawfish.

walked, as he supposed, with only birds and grasshoppers for companions, and they grew still, and the turtle-doves began to moan, and he smote his breast and cried—

"Ah! rules, rules! how easy to make, likewise break! Oh! the shame, the shame! *If* Victor Hugo had seen that! And if George Washington! But thou,"—some one else, not mentioned,—"thou sawedst it!"

The last word was still on the speaker's lips, when—there beside the path, with heavy eye and drunken frown, stood the father of Crébiche, the son of Catou, the little boy of twenty-five known as Chatoué. He spoke—

"To who is dat you speak? Talk wid de dev'?"

Bonaventure murmured a salutation, touched his hat, and passed. Chatoué moved a little and delivered a broadside—

"Afteh dat, you betteh leave! Yes, you betteh leave Gran' Point'!"

"Sir," said Bonaventure, turning with flushed face, "I stay."

"Yes," said the other, "dass righ'; you betteh go way and stay. *Magicien*," he added as the schoolmaster moved on, "*sorcier!*—Voudou!—jackass!"

What did all this mean?

CHAPTER VI.

WAR OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

CATOU, it seems, had gone one day to College Point with a pair of wild ducks that he had shot, — first of the season, — and offered them to the priest who preached for Grande Pointe once a quarter.

"Catou," said the recipient, in good French but with a cruel hardness of tone, "why does that man out there teach his school in English?" The questioner's intentions were not unkind. He felt a protector's care for his Acadian sheep, whose wants he fancied he, if not he only, understood. He believed a sudden overdose of enlightenment would be to them a real disaster, and he proposed to save them from it by the kind of management they had been accustomed to—they and their fathers—for a thousand years.

Catou answered the question only by a

timid smile and shrug. The questioner spoke again—

"Why do you Grande Pointe folk allow it? Do you want your children stuffed full of American ideas? What is in those books they are studying? You don't know? Neither do I. I would not look into one of them. But you ought to know that to learn English is to learn free-thinking. Do you know who print those books that your children are rubbing their noses in? Yankees! Oh, I doubt not they have been sharp enough to sprinkle a little of the stuff *they* call religion here and there in them; 'tis but the bait on the hook! But you silly 'Cadians think your children are getting education, and that makes up for everything else. Do you know what comes of it? Discontent. Vanity. Contempt of honest labour. Your children are going to be discontented with their lot. It will soon be good-bye to sunbonnets; good-bye to homespun; good-bye to Grande Pointe,—yes, and good-bye to the faith of your fathers. Catou, what do you know about that man, anyhow? You ask him no questions, you 'Cadians, and he—oh, he is too modest to tell you who or what he is. *Who pays him?*"

"He say pay is way behine. He say he don't get not'in' since he come yondeh," said Catou, the distress that had gathered on his face disappearing for a moment.

The questioner laughed contemptuously.

"Do you suppose he works that way for nothing? How do you know, at all, that his real errand is to teach school? A letter from Mr. Wallis! who simply told your simple-minded brother what the fellow told him! See here, Catou; you owe a tax as a raiser of tobacco, eh? And besides that, hasn't every one of you an absurd little sign stuck up on the side of his house, as required by the Government, to show that you owe another tax as a tobacco manufacturer? But still you have a little arrangement to neutralise that, eh? How do you know this man is not among you to look into that? Do you know that he *can* teach? No wonder he prefers to teach in English! I had a conversation with him the other day; I want no more; he preferred to talk to me in English. That is the good manners he is teaching; light-headed, hero-worshipping, free-thinker that he is."

Catou was sore dismayed. He had never

heard of hero-worship or free-thinking before, but did not doubt their atrocity.

It had never occurred to him that a man with a few spelling-books and elementary readers could be so dangerous to society.

"I wish he clear out from yondeh," said Catou. He really made his short responses in French, but in a French best indicated in bad English.

"Not for my sake," replied the priest, coldly smiling. "I shall just preach somewhere else on the thirteenth Sunday of each quarter, and let Grande Pointe go to the devil; for there is where your new friend is sure to land you. Good-day, I am very busy this morning."

These harsh words—harsh barking of the shepherd dog—spread an unseen consternation in Grande Pointe. Maximian was not greatly concerned. When he heard of the threat to cut off the spiritual table-crumbs with which the villagers had so scantily been fed, he only responded that in his opinion the dominie was no such a fool as that. But others could not so easily dismiss their fears. They began to say privately, leaning on fences and lingering at stiles, that they had felt from the very day

of that first mad bell-ringing that the whole movement was too headlong ; that this opening the sluices of English education would make trouble. Children shouldn't be taught what their parents do not understand. Not that there was special harm in a little spelling, adding, or subtracting, but—the notions they and the teacher produced ! Here was the school's influence going through all the place like the waters of a rising tide. All Grande Pointe was lifting from the sands, and in danger of getting afloat and drifting toward the current of the great world's life. Personally, too, the schoolmaster seemed harmless enough. From the children and he loving each other, the hearts of the seniors had become entangled. The children had come home from the atmosphere of that old tobacco-shed and persuaded the very grandmothers to understand vaguely —very vaguely and dimly—that the day of liberty which had come to the world at large a hundred years before had come at last to them ; that in France their race had been peasants ; in Acadia, forsaken colonists ; in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, exiles alien to the land, the language, and the times ; in St. Domingo,

penniless, sick, unwelcome refugees; and for just one century in Louisiana the jest of the proud Creole, held down by the triple fetter of illiteracy, poverty, and the competition of unpaid, half-clad, swarming slaves. But that now the slave was free, the school was free, and a new, wide, golden future waited only on their education in the greatest language of the world.

All this was pleasant enough to accept even in a dim way, though too good to be more than remotely grasped. But just when, as music in a sleeper's ear, it is taking hold of their impulses somewhat, comes the word of their hereditary dictator that this man is among them only for their destruction. What could they reply? They were a people around whom the entire world's thought had swirled and tumbled for four hundred years without once touching them. Their ancestors had left France before Descartes or Newton had begun to teach the modern world to think. They knew no method of reasoning save by precedent, and had never caught the faintest reflection from the mind of that great, sweet thinker who said, "A stubborn retention of customs is a turbulent thing, no less than the introduc-

tion of new." To such strangers in the world of to-day now came the contemptuous challenge of authority, defying them to prove that one who proposed to launch them forth upon a sea of changes out of sight of all precedent and tradition was not the hireling of some enemy's gold secretly paid to sap the foundations of all their spiritual and temporal interests and plunge them into chaos.

They blamed Bonaventure; he had got himself hated and them rebuked; it was enough. They said little to each other and nothing to him; but they felt the sleepy sense of injury we all know so well against one who was disturbing their slumber; and some began to suspect and distrust him, others to think hard of him for being suspected and distrusted. Yet all this reached not his ears, and the first betrayal of it was from the lips of Chatoué when, in his cups, he unexpectedly invited the schoolmaster to leave Grande Pointe.

After that, even the unconscious schoolmaster could feel the faint chill of estrangement. But he laid it not to his work, but to his personal unloveliness, and said to 'Mian he did not doubt if he were more

engaging there would not be so many maidens kept at the wheel and loom in the priceless hours of school, or so many strapping youths sent, all unlettered, to the sugar-kettles of the coast plantations what time M'sieu' Walleece big-in to gryne.

"'Tain't dat," said 'Mian. He had intended to tell the true reason, but his heart failed him, and when Bonaventure asked what, then, it was, he replied—

"Aw, dey don't get no time. Time run so fas',—run like a scared dog. I dunno fo' w'at dey make dat time run so fas' dat way."

"O my friend," cried the young schoolmaster, leaping from his chair, "say not that! If God did not make time to p'oceed with rapidness, who would ever do his best?"

It was such lessons as this that made the children—Crébiche among them—still gather round the humble master and love to grasp his hand.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE AND DUTY.

TIME ran fast. The seasons were as inexorable at Grande Pointe as elsewhere, but there was no fierceness in them. The very frosts were gentle. Slowly and kindly they stripped the green robes from many a tree, from many a thicket ejected like defaulting tenants the blue linnet, the orchard oriole, the nonpareil, took down all its leafy hangings and left it open to the winds and rain of December. The wet ponies and kine turned away from the north and stood in the slanting storm with bowed heads. The great wall of cypress swamp grew spectral. But its depths, the marshes far beyond sight behind them, and the little, hidden, rushy lakes, were alive with game. No snake crossed the path. Under the roof, on the galerie, the wheel hummed, the loom pounded; inside, the logs crackled and blazed on the hearth; on the board were venison,

mallard, teal, rice-birds, *sirop de baterie*, and *quitte;* round the fireside were pipes, pecans, old stories, and the Saturday night contra-dance; and every now and then came sounding on the outer air the long, hoarse bellow of some Mississippi steamer, telling of the great world beyond the tree-tops, a little further than the clouds and nearer than the stars.

Christmas passed, and New Year—time runs so fast! Presently yonder was 'Mian himself, spading a piece of ground to sow his tobacco seed in; then Catou and his little boy of twenty-five doing likewise; and then others all about the scattered village. Then there was a general spreading of dry brush over the spaded ground, then the sweet, clean smell of its burning, and, hanging everywhere throughout the clearing, its thin, blue smoke. The little frogs began to pipe to each other again in every wet place, the grass began to freshen, and almost in the calendar's midwinter the smiles of spring were wreathing everywhere.

What of the schoolmaster and the children? Much, much! The good work went on. Intense days for Bonaventure. The clouds of disfavour darkling in some places,

but brightening in others and, on the whole, he hoped and believed, breaking. A few days of vacation, and then a bright reunion and resumption, the children all his faithful adherents save one – Sidonie. She, a close student, too, but growingly distant and reticent. The State Superintendent still believed to be—

"Impending, impending, chil'run! he is impending! Any day he may precipitate upon us!"

Intense days, too, for Claude. Sidonie openly, and oh! so sweetly, his friend. Loving him? He could neither say nor know; enough, for the present, to be allowed to love her. His love knew no spirit of conquest yet; it was star-worship; it was angel adoration; seraphically pure; something so celestially refined that had it been a tangible object you could have held it up and seen the stars right through it. The thought of acquisition would have seemed like coveting the gold of a temple. And yet already the faintest hint of loss was intolerable. Oh! this happy, happy school-going—this faring sumptuously on one smile a day! Ah, if it might but continue! But alas! how Sidonie was grow-

ing! Growing, growing, daily! up, up, up! While he—there was a tree in the swamp where he measured his stature every day; but in vain; in vain! It never budged! And then—all at once—like the rose-vine on her galerie, Sidonie burst into bloom.

Her smiles were kinder and more frequent now than ever before; but the boy's heart was wrung. What chance now? In four long years to come he would not yet be quite nineteen, and she was fifteen now. Four years! He was in no hurry himself—could wait for ever and be happy every day of it; but she? Such prize as she somebody would certainly bear away before three years could run by, run they ever so fast.

Sitting and pondering one evening in the little bayou cabin, Claude caught the father's eye upon him, leaned his forehead upon the parent's knee, and silently wept. The rough father said a kind word, and the boy, without lifting his burning face, told his love. The father made no reply for a long time, and then he said in their quaint old French—

"Claude, tell the young schoolmaster. Of all men, he is the one to help you." And then in English, as you would quote Latin, "Knowledge is power!"

The next day he missed—failed miserably—in every lesson. At its close he sat at his desk, crushed. Bonaventure seemed scarce less tempest-tossed than he; and all about the school the distress spread as wintry grey overcasts a sky. Only Sidonie moved calmly her accustomed round like some fair, silent, wide-winged bird circling about a wreck.

At length the lad and his teacher were left alone. Claude sat very still, looking at his toil-worn hands lying crossed on the desk. Presently there sank an arm across his shoulders. It was the master's. Drop—drop—two big tears fell upon the rude desk's sleeve-polished wood. The small, hard, right hand slowly left its fellow and rubbed off the wet spots.

"Claude, you have something to disclose me?"

The drooping head nodded.

"And 'tis not something done wrongly?"

The lad shook his head.

"Then, my poor Claude,"—the teacher's own voice faltered for a moment,—"then—'tis—'tis she!" He stroked the weeping head that sank into its hands. "Ah! yes, Claude, yes; 'tis she; 'tis she! And you want me to help you. Alas! in vain you

want me! I cannot even try-y-y to help you; you have mentioned it too lately! 'Tis right you come to me, despiting discrepancy of years: but alas! the difficulty lies in the contrary; for alas! Claude, our two heart' are of the one, same age!"

They went out: and walking side by side toward the failing sun, with the humble flowers of the field and path newly opened and craving leave to live about their feet and knees, Bonaventure Deschamps revealed his own childlike heart to the simple boy whose hand clasped his.

"Yes, yes; I conceal not from you, Claude, that 'tis not alone 'thou lovest,' but 'I love'! If with cause to hope, Claude, I know not. And I must not search to know whilst yet the schoolmaster. And the same to you, Claude, whilst yet a scholah. We mus' let the dissimulation like a worm in the bud to h-eat our cheek. 'Tis the voice of honour cry—'Silence.' And during the meanwhilst, you? Perchance, at the last, the years passing and you enlarging in size daily and arriving to budding manhood, may be the successful; for suspect not I consider lightly the youngness of yo' passion. Attend what I shall reveal

you. Claude, there once was a boy, yo' size, yo' age, but fierce, selfish, distemperate; still more selfish than yo' schoolmaster of to-day." And there that master went on to tell of an early,—like Claude's, an all too early,—rash, and boyish passion, whose ragged wound, that he had thought never could heal, was now only a tender scar.

"And you, too, Claude, though now it seem not possible — you shall recuperate from this. But why say I this? Think you I would inoculate the idea that you must despair? Nay, perchance you shall achieve her." They stood near the lad's pirogue about to say adieu; the schoolmaster waved his hand backward toward the further end of the village. "She is there; in a short time she will cease to continue scholah; then—try." And again, with still more courageous kindness, he repeated, "Try! 'Tis a lesson that thou shouldest heed—try, try again. If *at* the first thou doest *not* succeed, try, try again."

Claude gazed gratefully into the master's face. Boy that he was, he did not read aright the anguish gathering there. From his own face the clouds melted into a glad sunshine of courage, resolve, and anticipa-

tion. Bonaventure saw the spark of hope that he had dropped into the boy's heart blaze up into his face. And what did Claude see? The hot blood mounting to the master's brow an instant ere he wheeled and hurried away.

"'Sieur Bonaventure!" exclaimed Claude; "'Sieur Bonaventure!"

But deaf to all tones alike, Bonaventure moved straight away along the bushy path and was presently gone from sight. There is a repentance of good deeds. Bonaventure Deschamps felt it gnawing and tearing hard and harder within his bosom as he strode on through the wild vernal growth that closed in the view on every side. Soon he halted; then turned, and began to retrace his steps.

"Claude!" The tone was angry and imperative. No answer came. He quickened his gait. "Claude!" The voice was petulant and imperious. A turn of the path brought again to view the spot where the two had so lately parted. No one was there. He moaned and then cried aloud, "O thou fool, fool, fool!—Claude!" He ran; faster—faster—down the path, away from all paths, down the little bayou's margin, into the lashes, into the mud and water. "Claude! Claude! I told you wrongly!

Stop ! *Arretez-là !* I must add somewhat ! —Claude ! " The bushes snatched away his hat ; tore his garments ; bled him in hands and face ; yet on he went into the edge of the forest. "Claude ! Ah ! Claude, thou hast ruin' me ! Stop, you young rascal !—thief !—robber !—brigand !" A vine caught and held him fast. "Claude ! Claude !"—The echoes multiplied the sound and scared from their dead-tree roost a flock of vultures. The dense wood was wrapping the little bayou in its premature twilight. The retreating sun, that for a while had shot its flaming arrows through the black boles and branches, had sunk now and was gone. Only a parting ruby glow shone through the tangle where far and wide the echoes were calling for Claude.

"Claude ! I mistook the facts in the case. There is no hope for you ! 'Tis futile you try—the poem is not for you ! I take everything back !—all back ! You shall not once try ! You have grasp' the advantage ! You got no business, you little rascal ! *You* dare venture to attempt making love in my school ! Claude St. Pierre, you are dismiss' the school ! Mutiny ! mutiny ! Claude St. Pierre, for mutinising, excluded the Gran' Point' school."

He tore himself from his fastenings and hastened back toward the village. The tempest within him was as fierce as ever, but already it, too, had turned, and was coming out of the opposite quarter. The better Bonaventure—the Bonaventure purified by fires that Grande Pointe had no knowledge of—was coming back into his gentle self-mastery. And because that other, that old time, Bonaventure, bound in chains deep down within, felt already the triumph of a moment slipping from his grasp, he silently now to the outer air, but loudly within, railed and gnashed and tore himself the more.

He regained the path and hurried along it, hatless, dishevelled, bespattered, and oblivious to everything save the war within. Presently there came upon him the knowledge, the certain knowledge, that Claude would come the next morning and ring the chapel bell, take his seat in school, stand in all his classes, know every lesson, and go home in the evening happy and all unchallenged of him. He groaned aloud.

"Ah! Claude! To dismiss or not to dismiss, it shall not be mine! But it shall be thine, Sidonie! And whether she is for

thee, Claude—so juvenile!—or for me, so unfit, unfit, unfit!—Ah! Sidonie, choose not yet!"—He stood rooted to the spot; while within easy earshot of his lightest word tripped brightly and swiftly across the path from the direction of the chapel a fawn, Claude's gift, and its mistress, Sidonie—as though she neither saw nor heard.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT CLAUDE'S MERCY.

TIME flagged not. The school shone on, within its walls making glad the teacher and the pupils with ever new achievements in knowledge and excellence, some of the vanguard — Claude, Sidonie, Etienne, Madelaine, Henri, Marcelline — actually going into the Third Reader. Such perfection in lessons as they told about at home—such mastery of English, such satisfactory results in pronunciation and emphasis! Reading just as they talked? Oh no, a thousand times no! The school's remoter light, its secondary influences, slowly spreading, but so slowly that only the eyes of enmity could see its increase. There were murmurs and head-shakings; but the thirteenth Sunday of the year's first quarter came, and the sermon whose withholding had been threatened was preached. And on the thirteenth Monday there was Bonaventure, still moving quietly across

the green toward the school-house with the children all about him. But a few days later the unexpected happened.

By this time Claude's father, whose teacher, you remember, was Claude, had learned to read. One day a surveyor, who had employed him as a guide, seeing the Acadian labouring over a fraction of rural newspaper, fell into conversation with him as they sat smoking by their camp-fire, and presently caught some hint of St. Pierre's aspirations for himself and his son.

"So there 's a public school at Grande Pointe, is there?"

"Oh, yass; fine school'ouse, hondred feet long! and fine titcher; splendid titcher; titch English."

"Well, well!" laughed the surveyor. "Well, the next thing will be a railroad."

St. Pierre's eyes lighted up.

"You t'ink!"

"Why, yes; you can't keep railroads away from a place long, once you let in the public school and teach English."

"You t'ink dass good?"

"What, a railroad? Most certainly. It brings immigration."

"Whass dat—'migrash'n?"

The surveyor explained.

The next time St. Pierre came to Grande Pointe—to sell some fish—he came armed with two great words for the final overthrow of all opponents of enlightenment—"Rellroad—'migrash'n."

They had a profound and immediate effect—exactly the opposite of what he had expected.

The school had just been dismissed; the children were still in sight, dispersing this way and that. Sidonie lingered a moment at the desk, putting it in order; Claude, taking all the time he could, was getting his canoe-paddle from a corner; Crébiche was waiting, by the master's command, to repair some default of the day: and Toutou, outside on his knees in the grass catching grasshoppers, was tarrying for his sister, when four or five of the village's best men came slowly and hesitatingly in. It required no power of divination for even the preoccupied schoolmaster to guess the nature of their errand. 'Mian was not among them. Catou was at their head. They silently bowed. The schoolmaster as silently responded. The visitors huddled together. They came a step nearer.

"Well," said Catou, "we come to see you."

"Sirs, welcome to Gran' Point' school—Sidonie, Crébiche, Claude, rest in yo' seats."

"Mo' betteh you tu'n 'em loose, I t'ink," said Catou amiably; "ain't it?"

"I rather they stay," replied Bonaventure. All sat down. There was a sustained silence, and then Catou said with quiet abruptness—

"We dawn't want no mo' school!"

"From what cause?"

"'Tain't no use."

"Sir—sirs, no use? 'Tis every use! The school-house? 'tis mo' worth than the gole mine. Ah! sirs, tell me: what is gole without education?"

They confronted the riddle for a moment.

"Ed'cation want to change everythin'—rellroad—'migrash'n."

"Change everything? Yes!—making everything better! Sirs, where is that country that the people are sorry that the railroad and the school-house have come?" Again the riddle went unanswered; but Catou sat as if in meditation, looking to one side, and presently said—

"I t'ink dass all humbug, dat titchin' English. What want titch English faw?"

"Sir," cried Bonaventure, "in America you mus' be American! Three Acadians have been governors of Louisiana! What made them thus to become?" He leaned forward and smote his hands together. "What was it? 'Twas English education!"

The men were silent again. Catou pushed his feet out, and looked at his shoes, put on for the occasion. Presently—

"Yaas," he said, in an unconvinced tone; "yaas, dass all right; but how we know you titch him right? Nobody can't tell you titchin' him right or no."

"And yet—I do! And the time approach when you shall know! Sirs, I make to you a p'oposition. Time is passing. It must be soon the State Sup'inten'ent Public Education visit this school. The school is any time ready. Since long time are we waiting. He shall come—he shall examine! The chil'run shall be ignorant this arrangement! Only these shall know—Claude, Sidonie, Crébiche; they will not disclose! And the total chil'run shall exhibit all their previous learning! And welcome the day, when the ad*ver*saries of education shall see those dear chil'run stan' up befo' the assem'led Gran' Point' spelling co'ectly words of one to eight

syllable' and *reading from their readers!* And if one miss—if *one—one!* miss, then let the school be shut and the schoolmaster banish-ed!"

It was so agreed. The debate did not cease at once, but it languished. Catou thought he had one strong point when he objected to education as conducive to idle habits; but when the schoolmaster hurled back the fact that communities the world over are industrious just in proportion as they are educated, he was done. He did not know, but when he confronted the assertion it looked so true that he could not doubt it. He only said—

"Well, anyhow, I t'ink 'tain't no use Crébiche go school no mo'." But when Bonaventure pleaded for the lad's continuance, that too was agreed upon. The men departed.

"Crébiche," said the master, holding the boy's hand at parting, "ah! Crébiche, if thou become not a good scholar"—and read a promise in the boy's swimming eye.

"Claude, Claude, I am at yo' mercy now." But the honest gaze of Claude and the pressure of his small, strong hand were a pledge. The grateful master turned to Sidonie, and again, as of old, no Sidonie was there.

CHAPTER IX.

READY.

SUMMER came. The song-birds were all back again, waking at dawn, and making the hoary cypress wood merry with their carollings to the wives and younglings in the nests. Busy times. Foraging on the helpless enemy — earthworm, gnat, grub, grasshopper, weevil, sawyer, dragon-fly — from morning till night: watching for him; scratching for him; picking, pecking, boring for him; poising, swooping, darting for him; standing upside down and peering into chinks for him; and all for the luxury — not of knowledge, but of love and marriage. The mocking-bird had no rest whatever. Back and forth from dawn to dark, back and forth across and across Grande Pointe clearing, always one way empty and the other way with his beak full of marketing; and then sitting up on an average half the night — sometimes the whole of it — at his

own concert. And with military duties too; patrolling the earth below, a large part of it, and all the upper air; driving off the weasel, the black snake, the hawk, the jay, the buzzard, the crow, and all that brigand crew—busy times! All nature in glad, gay earnest. Corn in blossom and rustling in the warm breeze; blackberries ripe; morning-glories underfoot; the trumpet-flower flaring from its dense green vine high above on the naked, girdled tree; the cotton-plant blooming white, yellow, and red in the field beneath; honey a-making in the hives and hollow trees; butterflies and bees lingering in the fields at sunset; the moth venturing forth at the first sign of dew; and Sidonie —a wild-rose-tree.

Mark you, this was in Grande Pointe. I have seen the wild-flower taken from its cool haunt in the forest and planted in the glare of a city garden. Alas! the plight of it, poor outshone, wilting, odourless thing! And then I have seen it again in the forest; and pleasanter than to fill the lap with roses and tulips of the conservatory's blood-royal it was to find it there, once more the simple queen of that green solitude.

So Sidonie. Acadian maidens are shy as

herons. They always see you first, silently rise, and are gone—from the galerie. They are more shy than violets. You would think they lived whole days with those dark, black-fringed eyes cast down; but—they see you first. The work about the house is well done where they are; there are apt to be flowers outside round about; while they themselves are as Paul desired to see the women in Bishop Timothy's church, "adorned in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety."

Flowers sprang plentifully where Sidonie dwelt. Her best homespun gown was her own weaving; the old dog lying on the galerie always thumped the floor with his tail and sank his obsequious head as that robe passed; the fawn—that Claude had brought—would come trotting and press his head against it; all the small living things of the dooryard would follow it about; and if she stood by the calf-pen the calves would push each other for the nearest place, lay their cheeks upon the fence's top, and roll their eyes—as many a youth of Grande Pointe would have done if he might. Chatoué,—I fear I have omitted to mention that the father of Crébiche, like the father

of Claude, had lost his wife before he was of age,—Chatoué looked often over that fence.

When matters take that shape a girl *must* quit school. And yet Sidonie, when after a short vacation the school resumed its sessions, resumed with it. Toutou, who had to admit now that his sister was even more grand for her age than he, was always available for protection. There was no wonder that Sidonie wished to continue; Bonaventure explained why—

"So in*ter*esting is that McGuffey's Third Reader!"

Those at home hesitated, and presently it was the first of October. Now it was too late to withdraw; the examination was to take place. The school's opponents had expressed little impatience at the State Superintendent's weary delay, but at length Catou asked, "Why dat man don't nevva come?"

"The wherefore of his non-coming I ignore," said Bonaventure, with a look of old pain in his young face; "but I am ready, let him come or let him come not."

"'Tain't no use wait no longer," said Catou; "jis well have yo' lil show widout him."

"Sir, it shall be had! Revolution never go backwood!"

Much was the toil, many the anxieties of the preparation. For Bonaventure at once determined to make the affair more than an examination. He set its date on the anniversary of the day when he had come to Grande Pointe. From such a day Sidonie could not be spared. She was to say a piece, a poem, an apostrophe to a star. A child, beholding the little star in the heavens, and wondering what it can be, sparkling diamond-like so high up above the world, exhorts it not to stop twinkling on his account. But to its tender regret the school knew that no more thereafter was Sidonie to twinkle in its firmament.

"Learn yo' lessons hard, chil'run; if the State Sup'inten'ent, even at the last, you know"—Bonaventure could not believe that this important outpost had been forgotten.

CHAPTER X.

CONSPIRACY.

ABOUT this time a certain Mr. Tarbox —G. W. Tarbox—was travelling on horseback and touching from house to house of the great sugar estates of the river "coast," seeing the country and people and allowing the *élite* to subscribe to the "Album of Universal Information."

One Sunday, resting at College Point, he was led by curiosity to cultivate the acquaintance of three men who had come in from Grande Pointe. One of them was Chatoué. He could understand them, and make them understand him, well enough to play *vingt et un* with them the whole forenoon. He won all their money, drank with them, and took their five subscriptions, Chatoué taking three—one for himself, one for Catou, and one for Crébiche. There was no delivery of goods there and then; they could not write; but they made their

marks, and it was agreed that when Mr. Tarbox should come along a few days later to deliver the volumes, they were not to be received or paid for until with his scholarly aid the impostor who pretended to teach English education at Grande Pointe had been put to confusion and to flight.

"All right," said Tarbox; "all *right*. I'm the kind of State Superintendent you want. I like an adventure; and if there's anything I just love, it's exposing a fraud! What day shall I come? Yes, I understand —middle of the day. I'll be on hand."

The fateful day came. In every house and on every galerie the morning tasks were early done. Then the best of every wardrobe was put on, the sun soared high, and by noon every chair in Grande Pointe was in the tobacco-shed where Knowledge poured forth her beams, and was occupied by one or two persons. And then, at last, the chapel bell above Claude's head pealed out the final signal, and the schoolmaster moved across the green. Bonaventure Deschamps was weary. Had aught gone wrong? Far from it. But the work had been great and it was now done. Everything was at stake: the cause of enlightenment and the

fortunes of his heart hung on the issue of the next few hours. Three pupils, one the oftenest rebuked of all the school, one his rival in love, one the queen of his heart, held his fate in their hands, and knew it. With these thoughts mingled the pangs of an unconfessed passion and the loneliness of a benevolent nature famishing for a word of thanks. Yes, and to-day he must be his own judge.

His coat was on his arm, and the children round about him in their usual way as they came across the common; but his words, always so kind, were, on this day of all days, so dejected and so few that the little ones stole glances into his face and grew silent. Then, all at once, he saw,—yea, verily, he *saw*,—standing near the school entrance, a man from the great outer world!

He knew it by a hundred signs—the free attitude, the brilliant silk hat, the shaven face, and every inch of the attire. As plainly as one knows a green tree from a dead one, the Crusoe of Grande Pointe recognised one who came from the haunts of men; from some great nerve-centre of human knowledge and power where the human mind, trained and equipped, had

piled up the spoils of its innumerable conquests. His whole form lighted up with a new life. His voice trembled with pent feeling as he said in deep undertone—

"Be callm, chil'run; be callm. Refrain excitement. Who you behole befo' you, yondeh, I ignore. But who shall we expect to see if not the State Sup'inten'ent Public Education? And if yea, then welcome, thrice welcome, the surprise! We shall not inquire him; but as a stranger we shall show him with how small reso'ce how large result." He put on his coat.

Mr. Tarbox had just reached the school-ground. His horse was fastened by the bridle to a picket in a fence behind him. A few boys had been out before the school-house, and it was the sudden cessation of their clamour that had drawn Bonaventure's attention. Some of them were still visible, silently slipping through the gaps in the *pieux* and disappearing within. Bonaventure across the distance marked him beckon persuasively to one of them. The lad stopped, came forward, and gave his hand; and thereupon a second, a third, fourth, fifth, tenth, without waiting for invitation, emerged again and advanced to

the same grave and silent ceremony. Two or three men who stood near did the same. The handshaking was just ending when Bonaventure and the stranger raised their hats to each other.

"Trust I don't intrude?"

"Sir, we are honoured, not intruded, as you shall witness. Will you give yourself the pain to enter the school-place? I say not school-house; 'tis, as its humble teacher, not fitly so nominated. But you shall therein find a school which, the more taken by surprise, not the less prepared."

"The State ought to build you a good school-house," said the stranger, with a slight frown that seemed official.

"Ah! sir," cried the young schoolmaster, beaming gratitude from his whole surface, "I—I,"—he smote his breast,—"I would reimburst her in good citizen' and mother' of good citizen'! And both reading, writing, and also ciphering,—arithmeticulating, in the English tongue, and grammatically! But enter and investigate."

A hush fell upon the school and the audience beyond it as the two men entered. Every scholar was in place—the little ones with bare, dangling feet, their shapely sun-

tanned ankles just peeping from pantaloons and pantalettes; the older lads beyond them; and off at the left the larger girls, and Sidonie. The visitor, as his eye fell last upon her, silently and all to himself drew a long whistle. The master stood and eyed him with unspoken but confessed pride. A little maiden of six slipped from the bench to the earth floor, came forward, gave her hand, and noiselessly returned. One by one, with eyes dropped, the remaining sixteen girls followed. It seemed for a moment as if the contagion might break out in the audience, but the symptom passed.

There was just room on the teacher's little platform for Bonaventure to seat his visitor a little at one side and stand behind his desk. The fateful moment had come. The master stood nervously drawn up, bell in hand. With a quick, short motion he gave it one tap, and set it down.

"That, sir, is to designate attention!" He waved a triumphant hand toward the spectacle before them.

"Perfect!" murmured the stranger. A look of earnest ecstasy broke out upon the master's face. He turned at first upon the audience and then upon the school.

"Chil'run, *chil'run*, he pronounced you perfect!" He turned again upon the visitor, threw high his right hand, flirted it violently, and cried—

"At random! exclusively at random; state what class! at random!"

"I—I doubt if I under——"

"Name any class, exclusively at random, and you shall see with what promptness and quietude the chil'run shall take each one their exactly co'ect places!"

"Oh, I understand. You want me to designate——"

"Any class! at yo' caprice."

"Well, if you have third class in geography."

"Or spelling?" cried Bonaventure, a momentary look of dismay giving place to fresh enthusiasm.

"Yes—spell—I mean spelling."

"Third spelling!" The tongue of the bell fell with the emphasis, and as silently as sleep the tiniest seven in the school, four pairs of pantaloons, three of pantalettes, with seven of little bare feet at their borders and seven of hands pointed down stiffly at their sides, came out and stood a-row. The master turned to the visitor.

"Now, commencing wherever, even at the foot if desired! ask, sir, if you please, any English word of one syllable, of however difficult!"

"No matter how difficult?"

"Well, they are timid, as you see; advance by degrees."

"Very well, then," said the visitor with much kindness of tone; "I will ask the little boy at this end."

"At the foot—but—still, 'tis well. Only—Ah, Crébiche! everything depend! Be prepared, Crébiche!"

"Yes," said the stranger: "I will ask him to spell hoss."

The child drew himself up rigidly, pointed his stiffened fingers down his thighs, rounded his pretty red mouth, and said slowly, in a low, melodious, distinct voice—

"'O-double eth, awth."

Bonaventure leapt from the platform and ran to the child.

"*Ah! mon p'tit garçon*—ah! my lil boy! 'O-double eth, listen, my chile. Oh, sir, he did not hear the word precisely. Listen, my chile, to yo' teacher! remember that his honour and the school's honour is in yo' spelling!" He drew back a step, poised

himself, and gave the word. It came like an anchor-chain crashing through a hawse-hole.

"Or-r-r-r-rus-seh!" And the child, winking at vacancy in the intensity of his attention spelled—

"Haich-o-r-eth-e, 'Orthe."

The breathless audience, leaning forward, read the visitor's commendation in his face. Bonaventure, beaming upon him, extended one arm, the other turned toward the child, and cried, shaking both hands tremulously—

"Another! another word! another to the same!"

"Mouse," said the stranger, and Bonaventure turned and cried—

"Mah-ooseh! my nob'e lil boy! Mah-ooseh!" and Crébiche, a speaking statue, spelled—

"M-o-u-eth-e, mouthe."

"Co'ect, my chile! And yet, sir, and yet 'tis he that they call Crébiche, because like the crawfish advancing backwardly. But to the next! another word! another word!"

The spelling, its excitements, its moments of agonizing suspense, and its triumphs, went on. The second class is up. It spells

in two, even in three, syllables. Toutou is in it. He gets tremendously wrought up; cannot keep two feet on the ground at once; spells fast when the word is his; smiles in response to the visitor's smile, the only one who dares; leans out and looks down the line with a knuckle in his mouth as the spelling passes down; wrings one hand as his turn approaches again; catches his word in mid-air and tosses it off, and marks with ecstasy the triumph and pride written on the face of his master.

"But, sir," cries Bonaventure, "why consume the spelling-book? Give, yourself, if you please, to Toutou, a word not therein comprise'." He glanced around condescendingly upon the people of Grande Pointe. Chatoué is in a front seat. Toutou gathers himself for the spring, and the stranger ponders a moment and then gives—"Florida!"

"F-l-o, flo, warr-de-warr-da,—Florida!"

A smile broke from the visitor's face unbidden, but—

"Right! my chile! co'ect Toutou!" cried Bonaventure, running and patting the little hero on the back and head by turns. "Sir, let us——" He stopped short. The eyes of the house were on Chatoué. He

had risen to his feet and made a gesture for the visitor's attention. As the stranger looked at him he asked—

"He spell dat las word r-i-i-ight?" But the visitor with quiet gravity said, "Yes, that was all right;" and a companion pulled the Raccoon down into his seat again. Bonaventure resumed.

"Sir, let us not exhoss the time with spelling! You shall now hear them read."

The bell taps, the class retires; again, and the reading class is up. They are the larger girls and boys. But before they begin the master has a word for their fathers and mothers.

"Friends and fellow-citizens of Gran' Point', think not at the suppi'zing goodness of yo' chil'run' reading. 'Tis to this branch has been given the largest attention and most ass*id*u'ty, so thus to comprise puffection in the English tongue, whether speaking aw otherwise." He turned to the stranger beside him. "I am not satisfied whilst the slightest accent of French is remaining. But you shall judge if they read not as if in their own vernaculary. And you shall choose the piece!"

The visitor waived the privilege, but Bona-

venture gently insisted, and he selected Jane Taylor's little poem, "The Violet," glancing across at Sidonie as he himself read out the first two lines—

> "Down in a green and shady bed,
> A modest violet grew."

Bonaventure proclaimed the title and page, and said—

"Claude, proceed!" And Claude read—

"'Dthee vy—ee-lit. Dah-oon-a hin hay grin and-a shad-y bade—A mo-dest-a vy-ee-lit grŏo—Hits-a stallk whoz baint hit hawngg-a hits hade—Has hif-a too hah-ed-a frawm ve-ŏo. Hand h-yet it whoz a lo-vly flow'r—Hits-a co-lors-a brah-eet and fair-a—Heet maheet-a hâve grass-ed a rozzy bow'r—Heenstade-a hof hah-ee-dingg there——"

"Stop!" cried Bonaventure; "stop! You pronounciate' a word faultily!" He turned to the visitor. "I call not that a miss; but we must inoculate the idea of puffection. So soon the sly-y-test misp'o-nounciating I pass to the next." He turned again: "Next!" And a black-haired girl began in a higher key, and very slowly—

"Yate there eet whoz cawntaint-a too bul-loom—Heen mo-dest-a teent z-arry-ed—And

there-a heet sprade-a heets swit prefume-a —Whit-hin thee sy-y-lent-a shade——"

"Stop! Not that you mistook, but—'tis enough. Sir, will you give yourself the pain to tell—not for my sake or reputation, but to the encouragement of the chil'run, and devoid flattery—what is yo' opinion of that specimen of reading? Not t'oubling you, but, in two or three word' only—if you will give yo'self the pain——"

"Why, certainly; I think it is—I can hardly find words—it 's remarkable." Bonaventure started with joy.

"Chil'run, do you hear? Remawkable! But do you not detect no slight—no small faultiness of p'onounciating?"

"No, not the slightest—I smile, but I was thinking of something else." His eye, wandering a trifle, caught Chatoué giving him one black look that removed his disposition to smile, yet he insisted, "No, sir; I can truthfully say I never heard such a pronunciation." The audience drank his words.

"Sir," cried the glad preceptor, "'tis toil have p'oduce it! Toil of the teacher, in*dust*ry of the chil'run! But it has p'oduce' *beside!* Sir, look—that school! Since one

year commencing the A B C—and now spelling word' of eight syllabl' !"

"Not *this* school——?'

"Sir, you shall see—or, more p'operly, hear. First spelling !"

"Yes," said the stranger, seeing Sidonie rise, "I 'd like to hear that class ;" and felt Chatoué looking at him again.

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT, LOVE, AND VICTORY.

THE bell tapped, and they came forth to battle. There was the line, there was the leader. The great juncture of the day was on him. Was not here the State's official eye? Did not victory hover overhead? His reserve, the darling regiment, the flower of his army, was dressing for the final charge. There was Claude. Next him, Sidonie!—and Etienne and Madelaine, Henri and Marcelline,—all waiting for the word—the words—of eight syllables! Supreme moment! Would any betray? Banish the thought! Would any fail?

He waited an instant while two or three mothers bore out great armfuls of slumbering or fretting infancy and a number of young men sank down into the vacated chairs. Then he stepped down from the platform, drew back four or five yards from the class, opened the spelling-book, scanned

the first word, closed the book with his finger at the place, lifted it high above his head, and cried—

"Claude! Claude, my brave scholar, always perfect, ah you ready?" He gave the little book a half whirl round and dashed forward toward the chosen scholar, crying as he came—

"In-e-rad-i-ca-bility!"

Claude's face suddenly set in a stony vacancy, and with his eyes staring straight before him he responded—

"I-n, in-, e, inerad-, r-a-d, rad-, inerad-, ineraddy-, ineradica-, c-a, ca, ineradica-, ineradicabili-, b-i-elly-billy, ineradicabili-, ineradicabili-, t-y, ty, ineradicability."

"Right! Claude, my boy! my always good scholar, right!" The master drew back to his starting-place as he spoke, reopened the book, shut it again, lifted it high in air, cried, "Madelaine, my dear chile, prepare!" whirled the book and rushed upon her with—

"In-de-fat-i-ga-bil-ly-ty!"

Madelaine turned to stone and began—

"I-n, een, d-e, de-, inde-, indefat-, indefat—fat—f-a-t, fat, indefat, indefatty, i, ty, indefati- indefatiga-, g-a, ga, indefatiga-, in-

defatigabilly, b-i-elly, billy, indefatigabi li't-y, ty, indefatigability."

"O Madelaine, my chile, you make yo teacher proud! prah-ood, my chile!" Bonaventure's hand rested a moment tenderly on her head as he looked first toward the audience and then toward the stranger. Then he drew off for the third word. He looked at it twice before he called it. Then—

"Sidonie! ah! Sidonie, be ready! be prepared! fail not yo' humble school-teacher! In-com—" He looked at the word a third time, and then swept down upon her—

"In-com-pre-hen-si-ca-*bility!*"

Sidonie flinched not nor looked upon him, as he hung over her with the spelling-book at arm's-reach above them; yet the pause that followed seemed to speak dismay, and throughout the class there was a silent recoil from something undiscovered by the master. But an instant later Sidonie had chosen between the two horns of her agonising dilemma, and began—

"I-n, een, c-o-m, cawm, eencawm, eencawmpre, p-r-e, pre, eencawmpre, eencawmprehen, prehen, haich-e-n, hen, hen, eencawmprehensi, s-i, si, eencawmprehensi-, b-i-l, bil——"

"Ah! Sidonie! Stop! *Arrêtez!* Si-do-nie-e-e-e! Oh! listen—*écoutez*—Sidonie, my dear!" The master threw his arms up and down in distraction, then suddenly faced his visitor, "Sir, it was my blame! I spoke the word without adequate distinction! Sidonie —*maintenant*—now!" But a voice in the audience interrupted with—

"*Assoiez-vous là*, Chatoué! Seet down, yondeh!" And at the potent voice of Maximian Roussel the offender was pushed silently into the seat he had risen from, and Bonaventure gave the word again.

"In-com-pre-hen-si-ca-bil-i-ty!" And Sidonie, blushing like fire, returned to the task—

"I-n, een ——" She bit her lip and trembled.

"Right! *Right!* Tremble not, my Sidonie! fear naught! yo' loving school-teacher is at thy side!" But she trembled like a red leaf as she spelled on—"Haich-e-n, hen, eencawmprehen, eencawmprehensi, s-i, si-, eencawmprehensi-, eencawmprehensi-billy-t-y, ty, incomprehensibility!"

The master dropped his hands and lifted his eyes in speechless despair. As they fell again upon Sidonie, her own met them. She

moaned, covered her face in her hands, burst into tears, ran to her desk and threw her hands and face upon it, shaking with noiseless sobs and burning red to the nape of her perfect neck. All Grande Pointe rose to its feet.

"Lost!" cried Bonaventure, in a heart broken voice. "Everything lost! Farewell, chil'run!" He opened his arms toward them and with one dash all the lesser ones filled them. They wept. Tears welled from Bonaventure's eyes; and the mothers of Grande Pointe dropped again into their seats and silently added theirs.

The next moment all eyes were on Maximian. His strong figure was mounted on a chair, and he was making a gentle, commanding gesture with one hand as he called—

"Seet down! Seet down, all han'!" And all sank down, Bonaventure in a mass of weeping and clinging children. 'Mian too resumed his seat, at the same time waving to the stranger to speak.

"My friends," said the visitor, rising with alacrity, "I say when a man makes a bargain, he ought to stick to it!" He paused for them—as many as could—to take in the

meaning of his English speech, and, it may be, expecting some demonstration of approval; but dead silence reigned, all eyes on him save Bonaventure's and Sidonie's. He began again.

"A bargain 's a bargain!" And Chatoué nodded approvingly, and began to say, audibly, "Yass;" but 'Mian thundered out—

"*Taise toi*, Chatoué! Shot op!" And the silence was again complete, while the stranger resumed.

"There was a plain bargain made." He moved a step forward and laid the matter off on the palm of his hand. "There was to be an examination; the school was not to know; but if one scholar should make one mistake the school-house was to be closed and the schoolmaster sent away. Well, there's been a mistake made, and I say a bargain's a bargain." Dead silence still. The speaker looked at 'Mian. "Do you think they understand me?"

"Dey meck out," said 'Mian, and shut his firm jaws.

"My friends," said the stranger once more, "some people think education's a big thing, and some think it ain't. Well, sometimes it is and sometimes it ain't. Now,

here's this man" — he pointed down to where Bonaventure's dishevelled crown was drooping to his knees — "claims to have taught over thirty of your children to read. Well, what of it? A man can know how to read and be just as no account as he was before. He brags that he's taught them to talk English. Well, what does that prove? A man *might* speak English and starve to death. He claims, I am told, to have taught some of them to write. But I know a man in the penitentiary that can write; he wrote too much."

Bonaventure had lifted his head and was sitting with his eyes upon the speaker in close attention. At this last word he said—

"Ah! sir! too true, too true ah yo' words; nevertheless, their cooelty! 'Tis not what is print' *in* the books, but what you learn *through* the books!"

"Yes; and so you hadn't never ought to have made the bargain you made; but, my friends, a bargain's a bargain, and the teacher's——" He paused invitingly, and an answer came from the audience. It was Catou who rose and said—

"Naw, sah. Naw; he don't got to go!" But again 'Mian thundered—

"*Taise toi*, Catou. Shot op!"

"I say," continued the stranger, "the mistake 's been made. *Three* mistakes have been made!"

"Yass!" roared Chatoué, leaping to his feet and turning upon the assemblage a face fierce with triumph. Suspense and suspicions were past now; he was to see his desire on his enemy. But instantly a dozen men were on their feet—St. Pierre, Catou, Bonaventure himself, with a countenance full of pleading deprecation, and even Claude, flushed with anger.

"Naw, sah! Naw, sah! Waun meesteck!"

"Seet down, all han'!" yelled 'Mian; "all han' seet dah-oon!" Only Chatoué took his seat, glancing upon the rest with the exultant look of one who can afford to yield ground.

"The first mistake," resumed the stranger, addressing himself especially to the risen men still standing, and pointedly to Catou, "the first mistake was in the kind of bargain you made." He ceased, and passed his eyes around from one to another until they rested an instant on the bewildered countenance of Chatoué. Then he

turned again upon the people, who had sat down, and began to speak with the exultation of a man that feels his subject lifting him above himself.

"I came out here to show up that man as a fraud. But what do I find? A poor, unpaid, half-starved man that loves his thankless work better than his life, teaching what not one schoolmaster in a thousand can teach; teaching his whole school four better things than were ever printed in any school-book—how to study, how to think, how to value knowledge, and to love one another and mankind. What you 'd ought to have done was to agree that such a school should keep open, and such a teacher should stay, if jest one, one lone child should answer one single book-question right! But as I said before, a bargain 's a bargain—Hold on there! Sit down! You sha'n't interrupt me again!" Men were standing up on every side. There was confusion and a loud buzz of voices. "The second mistake," the stranger made haste to cry, "was thinking the teacher gave out that last word right. He gave it wrong! And the third mistake," he shouted against the rising commotion, "was thinking it was spelt wrong. *She*

spelt it right! And a bargain 's a bargain! The schoolmaster stays!"

He could say no more; the rumble of voices suddenly burst into a cheer. The women and children laughed and clapped their hands,—Toutou his feet also,—and Bonaventure, flirting the leaves of a spelling-book till he found the place, looked, cried—"In-com-pre-hen-*sibility!*" wheeled and dashed upon Sidonie, seized her hands in his as she turned to fly, and gazed speechlessly upon her, with the tears running down his face. Feeling a large hand upon his shoulder, he glanced around and saw 'Mian pointing him to his platform and desk. Thither he went. The stranger had partly restored order. Every one was in his place. But what a change! What a gay flutter throughout the old shed! Bonaventure seemed to have bathed in the fountain of youth. Sidonie, once more the school's queen-flower, sat calm, with just a trace of tears adding a subtle something to her beauty.

"Chil'run, beloved chil'run," said Bonaventure, standing once more by his desk, "yo' schoolteacher has the blame of the sole mistake; and, sir, gladly, oh, gladly, sir,

would he always have the blame rather than any of his beloved school-chil'run! Sir, I will boldly ask you—*ah* you not the State Sup'inten'ent Public Education?"

"No, I——"

"But surely, sir, then a greater?—Yes, I discover it, though you smile. Chil'run—friends—not the State Sup'inten'ent, but greater!—Pardon; have yo' chair, sir."

"Why, the examination 's over, isn't it? Guess you 'd better call it finished, hadn't you?" He made the suggestion softly, but Bonaventure answered aloud—

"Figu'atively speaking, 'tis conclude'; but—pardon—you mention writing. Shall you paht f'om us not known—not leaving yo' name—in a copy-book, for examp'?"

"With pleasure. You do teach writing?"

"If I teach writing? To such desks, yes. 'Twould be to all but for the privation of desks. You perceive how we have here nothing less than a desk famine. Madelaine! Claude! Sidonie!—present, copy-book'! Sir, do you not think every chile should be provided a desk?—Ah! I knew 'twould be yo' verdic'. But how great trouble I have with that subjec'! Me, I think yes; but the parents."—he looked

tenderly over among them, — "they contend no. Now, sir, here are three copy-books. Inspect; criticise. No, commence rather, if you please, with the copy-book of Madelaine; then *proceed* to the copy-book of Claude, and finally conclude at the copy-book of Sidonie; thus rising by degrees: good, more good, most good."

"How about," asked the stranger, with a smile, as he turned the leaves, "about Toutou and Crébiche; don't they write?"

"Ah! sir," said Bonaventure, half to the stranger and half to the assemblage, "they write, yes; but—they ah yet in the pot-hook and chicken-track stage. And now, chil'run, in honour of our eminent friend's visitation, and of the excellence with which you have been examine', I p'onounce the *exhibition* finish'—dispensing with 'Twink', twink' lil stah.' And now in the book of the best writing scholar in the school—you, sir, deciding that intricacy—shall now be written the name of the eminent frien' of learning hereinbefo' confronting. — Claude! a new pen!"

The stranger made his choice among the books.

"Chil'run, he has select' the book of

Sidonie!" Bonaventure reached and swung a chair into place at his desk. The visitor sat down. Bonaventure stood over him, gazing down at the hand that poised the pen. The silence was profound.

"Chil'run—sh-sh-sh!" said the master, lifting his left arm but not his eyes. The stranger wrote a single initial.

"G! chil'run; G!—Sir, does it not signify George?"

"Yes," murmured the writer; "it stands for George." He wrote another.

"W! my chil'run; George W!—Sir, does it not sig—— *My* chil'run! George Washington! George Washington, my chil-'run! George Washington, the father of his country! My chil'run and fellow-citizen' of Gran' Poin', he is nominated for George Washington, the father of his country! Sir, ah you not a relation?"

"I really can't tell you," said the writer, with a calm smile. "I've always been too busy to look it up." He finished his signature as he talked. Bonaventure bent over it.

"Tar-box. Chil'run and friends and fellow-citizen', I have the p'oudness to int'oduce you the honou'able George Wash-

ington Tarbox! And now the exhibition is dismiss'; but stop! Sir, if some—aw all—desire gratefully to shake hand'?"

"I should feel honoured."

"Attention, everybody! Make rank! Everybody by two by two, the school-chil-'run coming last,—Claude and Sidonie resting till the end,—pass' round—shake hand'—walk out—similah a fu-nial."

So came, shook hands, and passed out to their simple homes, the manhood, motherhood, maidenhood, childhood of Grande Pointe, not knowing that before many days every household in the village was to be a subscriber to the "Album of Universal Information."

One of the last of the householders was Chatoué. But when he grasped the honoured hand, he also held it, fixing upon its owner a generous and somewhat bacchanalian smile.

"I 'm a fool, but *I* know. You been put op a jawb on me. Dass four, five days now I been try to meck out what dat niggah at Belle Alliance holla to me when I gallop down de road." (Chatoué's English had been acquired from negroes in the sugar-house, and was like theirs.) "He been

braggin' dat day befo'"—turning to Bonaventure — "how 'twas him show you de road to Gran' Point' las' year; and so I tell him, me," addressing the stranger again, "how we goin' git school shot op. Well, dat night I mit him comin' fum Gran' Point' and he hol' at me. I been try evva since meck out what he say. Yass. An' I *jis* meck it out! He say, 'Watch out, watch out, 'Mian Roussel and dat book-fellah dawn't put op jawb on *you*.' Well, I 'm a fool, but I know. You put op jawb on me; I know. But dass all right—*I don't take no book*." He laughed with the rest, scratched his tipsy head, and backed out through the *pieux*.

Only a fairy number remained, grouped around the honourable Tarbox. They were St. Pierre, Bonaventure, — Maximian detaining a middle-aged pair, Sidonie's timorous guardians,— and two others, who held back, still waiting to shake hands.

"Claude," cried Bonaventure; "Sidonie."

They came. Claude shook hands and stepped aside. Sidonie, with eyes on the ground, put forth her hand. The honoured guest held it lingeringly, and the ceremonies were at an end.

"Come," said 'Mian, beckoning away the great G. W.'s probable relative. They passed out together. "Come!" he repeated, looking back and beckoning again; "walk een! all han'! walk een house!"

The guardian pair followed, hand in hand.

"Claude," said Bonaventure tenderly; but—

"Claude," more firmly said St. Pierre.

The boy looked for one instant from the master's face to Sidonie's; then turned, grasped his father's hand, and followed the others.

A blaze of light filled Bonaventure's heart. He turned to Sidonie to give his hand—both her hands were clasped upon each other and they only tightened. But their eyes met—ah! those Acadian maidens, they do it all with their eyes!—and lover and maiden passed out and walked forth side by side. They are going that way still, only—with hands joined.

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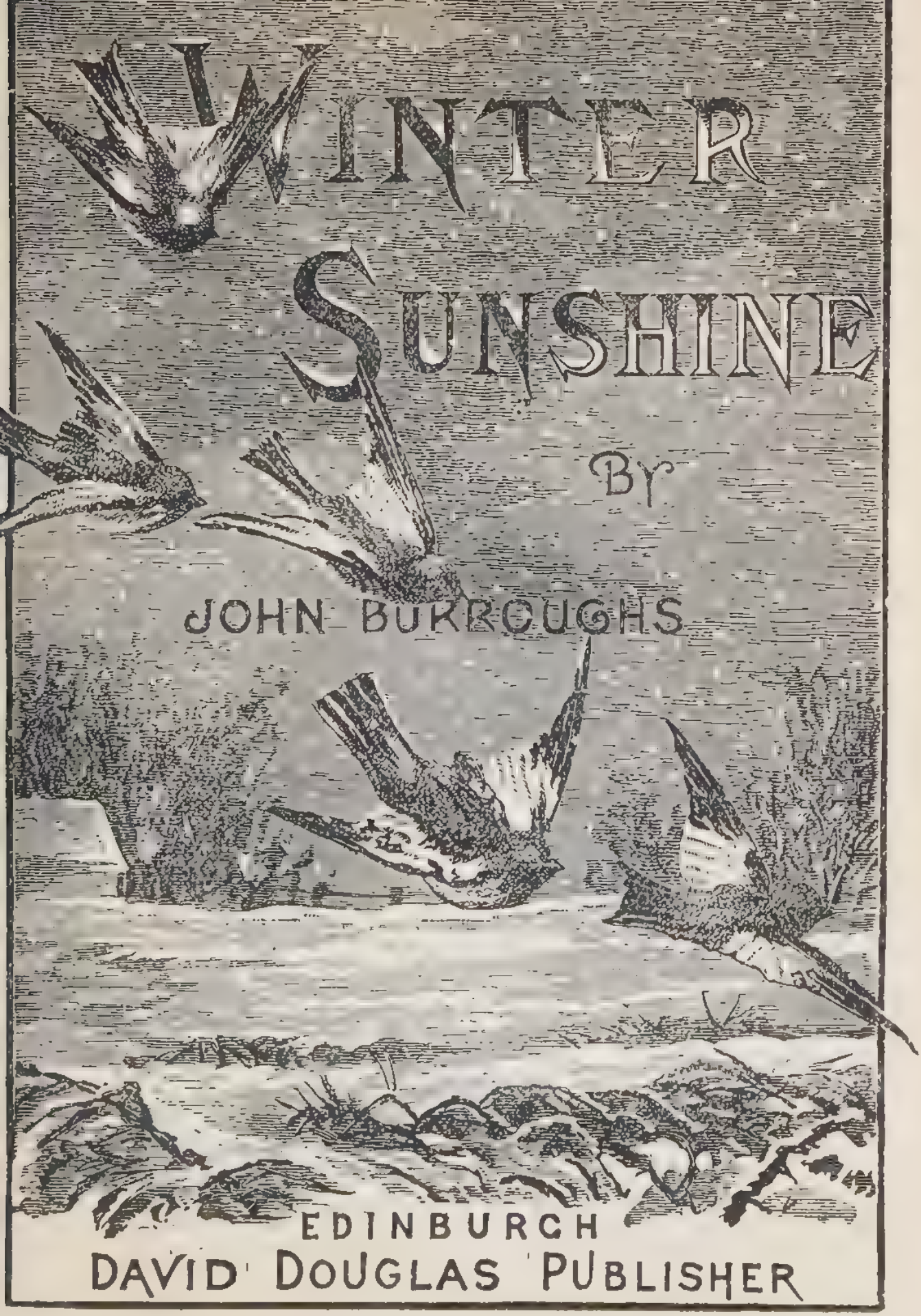
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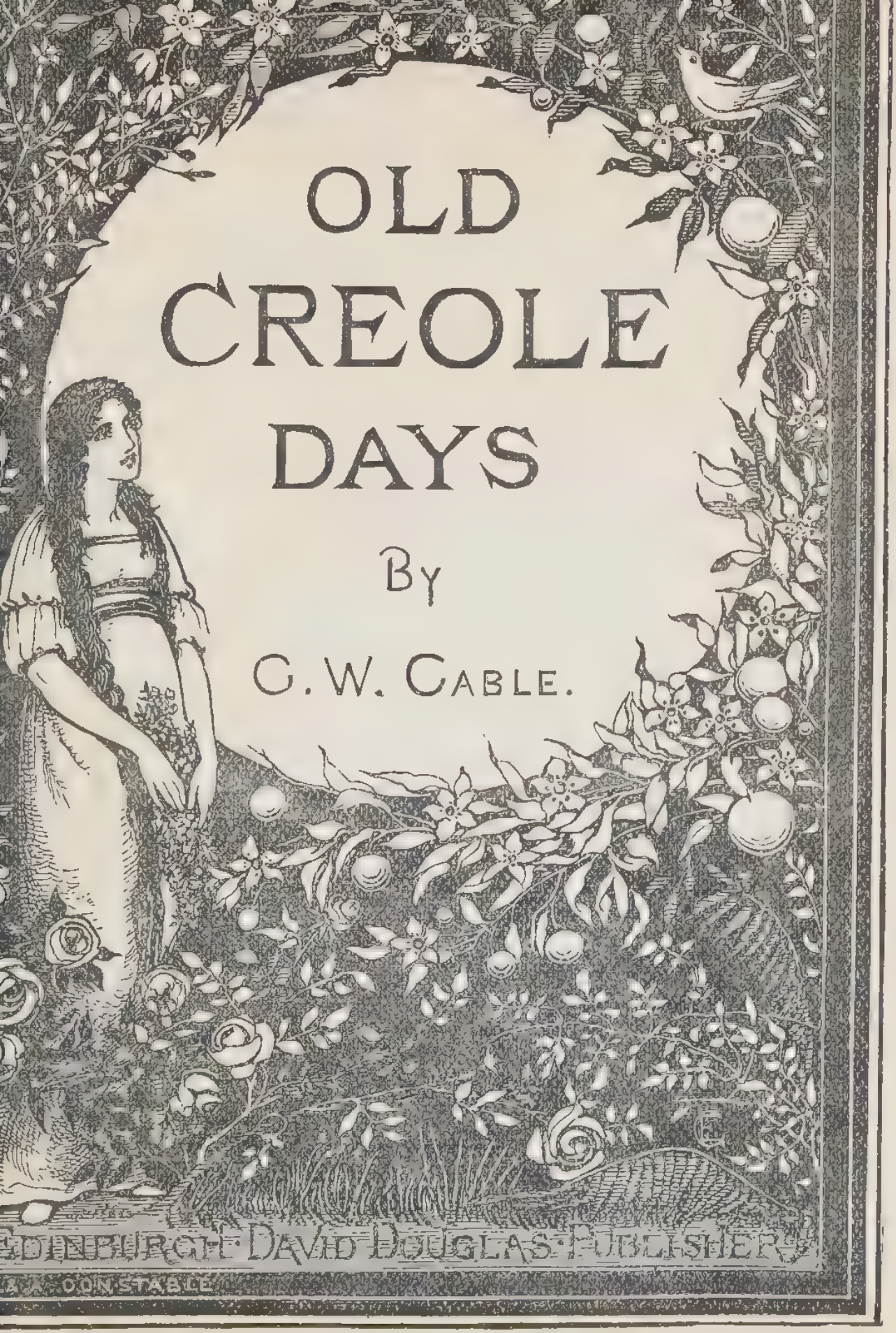
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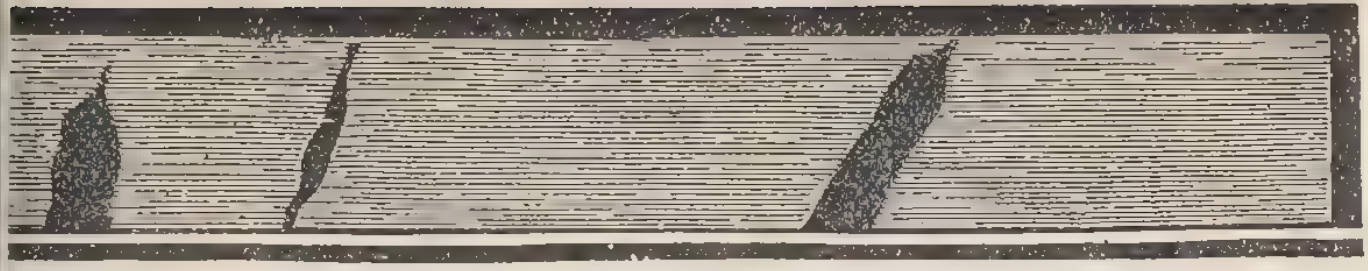

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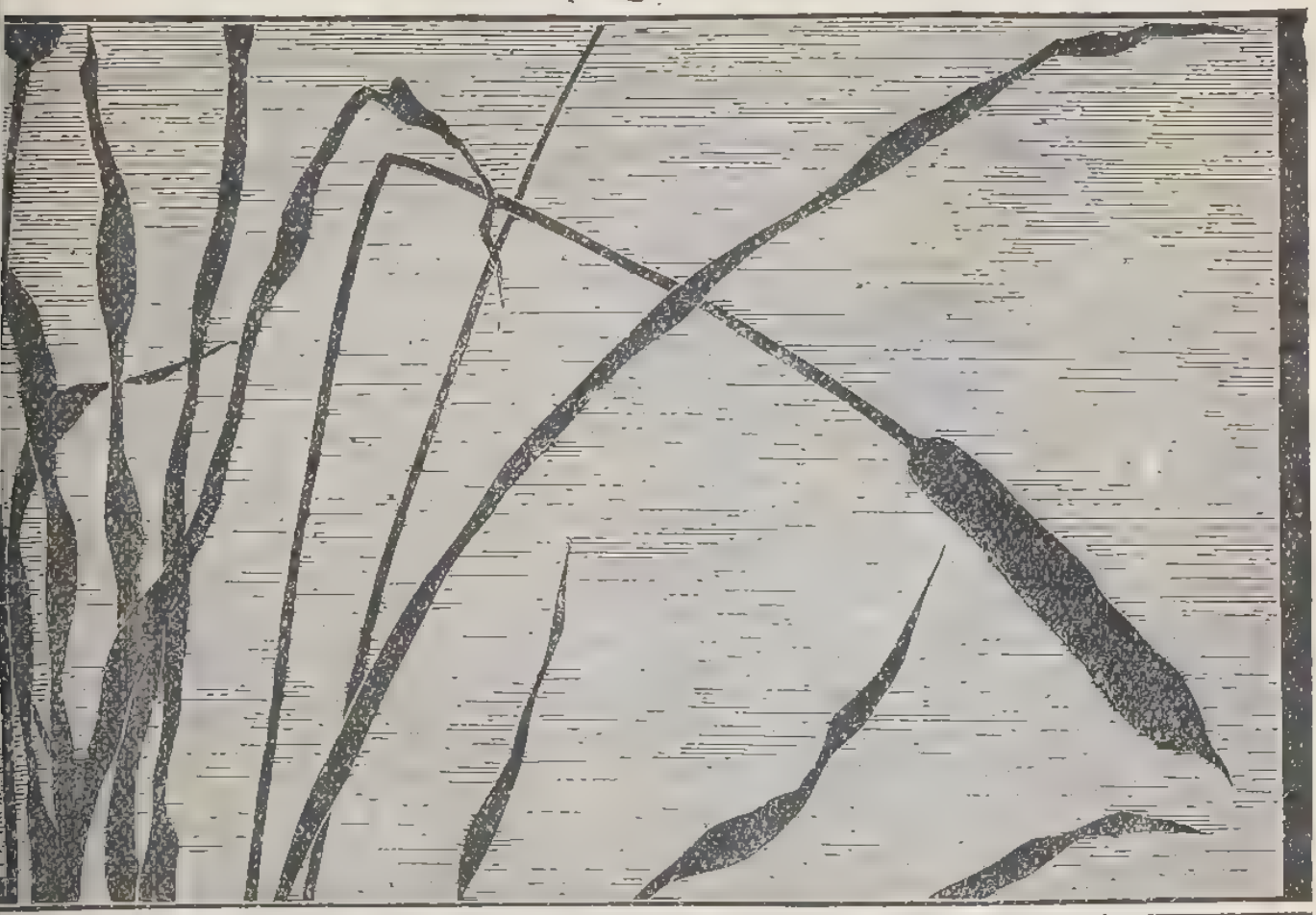

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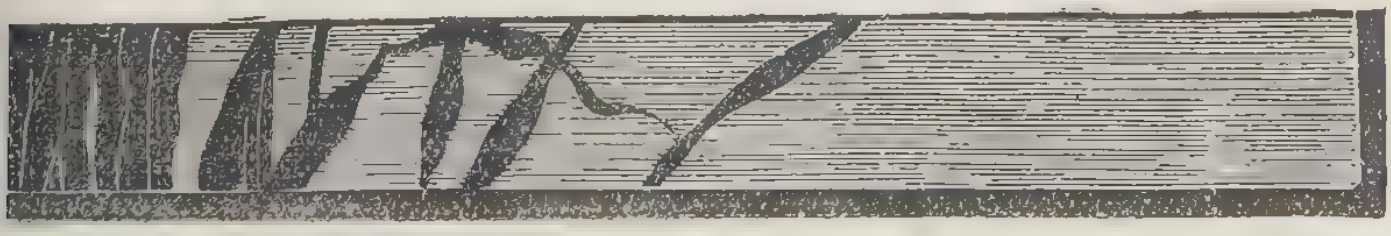

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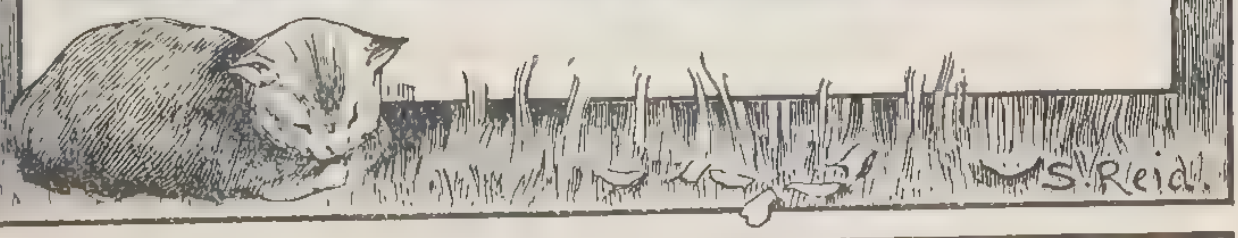

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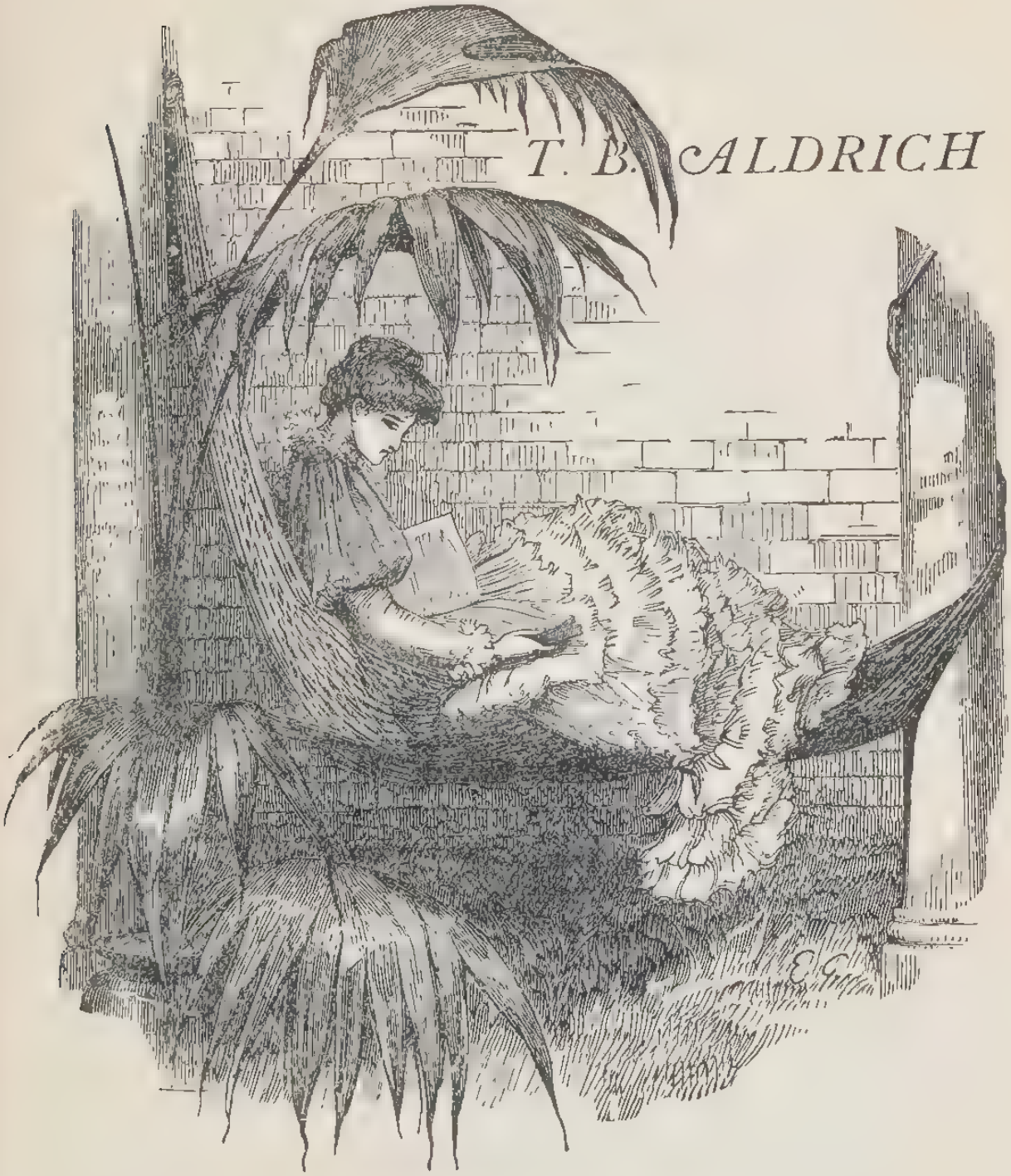

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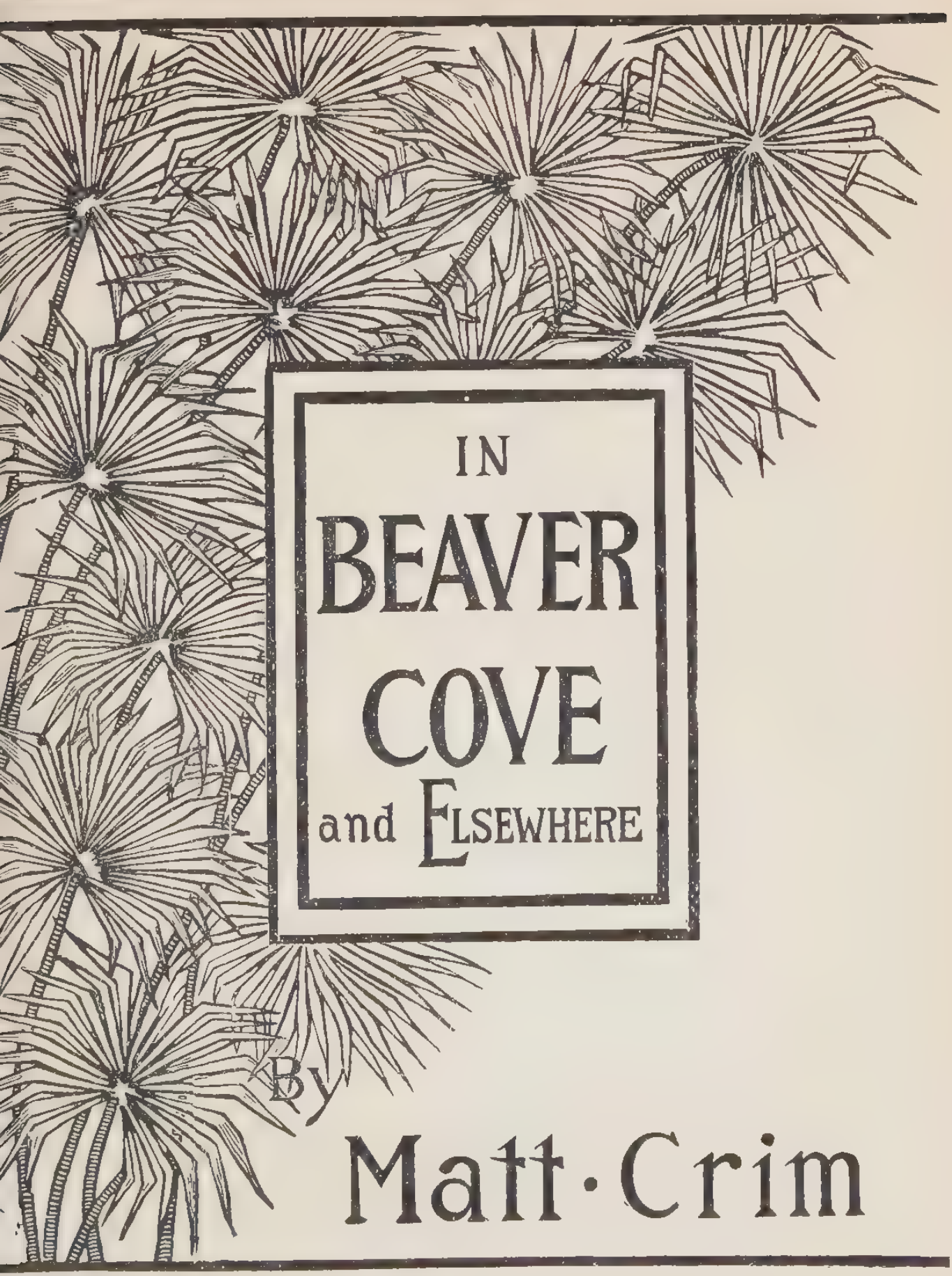

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